PS3 PlayStation 3 | PSP PlayStation Portable | PlayStation 2

PlayStation® Official Magazine

Issue 046 June 2011

LARA CROFT comes of age

SAINTS ROW: THE THIRD

Outrageous! Crass! Idiotic! Awesome?

PlayStation - The Official Magazine Issue 46 (June 2011)

READY TO RISK IT ALL

TOMB RAIDER

+

REVIEWED

SOCOM 4

Portal 2

Mortal Kombat

Laundry, latte, lizards? History according to games. p.50

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BATMAN: ARKHAM CITY **SONIC** PS3 ESSENTIALS **EL SHADDAI**

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Violence

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PlayStation® The Official Magazine

JUNE 2011

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Don't call it a comeback. This is a reboot with a younger, more agile, more human Lara Croft. See how our favorite female archaeologist is being remade and, thankfully, remodeled.

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76 MORTAL KOMBAT
The action is bloodier, the beatings are more intense. There's online play, skull-shattering attacks, and a god named Kratos. It is time for the great beatdown, courtesy of *Mortal Kombat*.

Master Obelisk

80 PATAPON 3
The beating of the drums spells a return to Pata-pata-pleasurable gameplay.

All Grown Up

The new Lara Croft is surprisingly Mature

"I'm surprised that you didn't ask me the big question."

We were on our way to dinner after an exhilarating day seeing *Tomb Raider* in action, followed by hours of writer Evan Shamoon and I grilling the team, trying to extract every last bit of info on our cover star. Now I was sitting in the passenger seat of Crystal Dynamic brand director Karl Stewart's car when he pointed out something I had overlooked.

"What's that?" I asked.

"That this is the first Mature-rated *Tomb Raider*," he said. "You didn't ask about that."

Huh. Come to think of it, neither Evan nor I had questioned them about the game's promise of a Mature rating. Oh, we saw "mature" content in action. Plenty of it. We winced as Lara had to pull a shard of debris from her side. We gasped when we first saw Lara brutally killed in action. But we never bothered to ask about this more mature approach because it was, in fact, *more mature*.

It's proof that blood and guts does not equal (lower-case "M") mature. Nor does an ample front end. Nor does foul language. Being mature is about confidence. It's about telling a story that doesn't compromise. It's about having the courage to let a character grow and evolve, to put her through the paces in a way that's neither pointless nor prurient.

And that's what we saw from *Tomb Raider*. This is a more mature Lara Croft than we've ever encountered, and that's why the Mature rating didn't strike us as noteworthy. Lara has finally grown up, and that's a very good thing.

GARY

Gary Steinman
Editor in Chief
twitter.com/TinyManRages

Gary Steinman
Editor in Chief
Gary Steinman steers the good ship PTOM through stormy seas. Also, he lets us honk the horn, but only if we play our videogames like we're supposed to.

Greg Orlando
Executive Editor
The great and disturbing truth that Count Chocula is not, in fact, royalty will no doubt haunt Gregory Orlando for the next three minutes. Give or take.

Ken Bousquet
Art Director
If Ken built the BioTron machine, it would be a work of bio-writing art. Since he only makes magazine art, our dear readers have to settle for common bios.

Roger Burchill
Managing Editor
Who would have predicted Roger Burchill would be made the subject of a PTOM staff biography? It's like a dream, but we're still wearing pants!

Scott Butterworth
Associate Editor
A modern-day Herotodus amid latter-day Larry the Cable Guys, Scott Butterworth reminds us all to make time for what's most important. Hammer Time.

Anne Lewis
Editorial Intern
Offering verse for the better (and never for worse), intern Anne Lewis has also proffered kung fu haiku and concrete poetry we drop snitches off bridges with.

Christin Chi
This is goodbye...
Our humanity itself will wither and die now that Christin Chi is leaving for greener pastures. Until we clone the skin cells we found on her keyboard, that is.

¡El Desconocido!
Or is this hello?
Who is the mystery man known as ¡El Desconocido!? Is it secretly Greg Orlando seeking two paychecks? Time will tell, dear reader, time will tell. Or will it?

PlayStation®
The Official Magazine

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Presented by the PlayStation®Network

Inside Qore Episode 37

Through the Looking Glass

We're excited to reveal a brand new Qore, with new features and behind-the-scenes improvements. We think of it as our PSN wonderland, unlike the unsettling, stunning *Alice: Madness Returns*. American McGee gives us a personal tour of his creation. Mix pulp with horror, and get the grindhouse style, *Shadows of the Damned*. The gory, funny action could only come from the minds behind *Resident Evil*, *No More Heroes*, and more. *Supremacy MMA's* brutality comes from real fighters; we step inside the ring with the lovely and dangerous Felice Herrig. And Ted Price, the creator of Insomniac Games, explains what keeps him up at night and gives us a peek into his next games.

VERONICA BELMONT HOST OF QORE

Available
6/7/2011
on the
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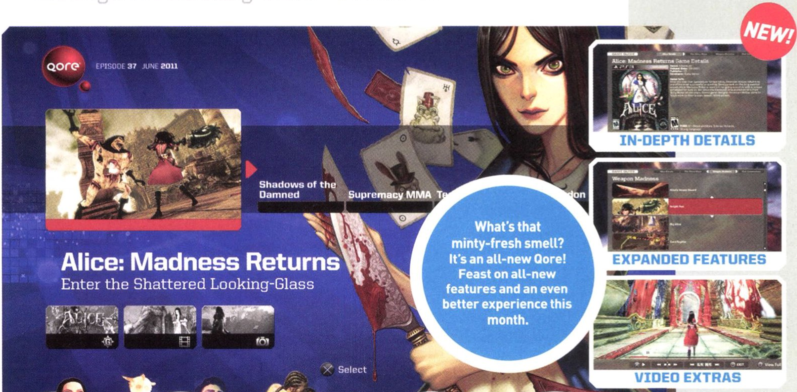
qore EPISODE 37 JUNE 2011
Shadows of the Damned
Supremacy MMA
Alice: Madness Returns
Enter the Shattered Looking-Glass
Select
Alice: Madness Returns Game Details
Weapon Madness

NEW!

IN-DEPTH DETAILS

EXPANDED FEATURES

VIDEO EXTRAS

What's that minty-fresh smell? It's an all-new Qore! Feast on all-new features and an even better experience this month.

Alice: Madness Returns

Restore Wonderland's shattered world—and your sanity.

Shadows of the Damned

Fighting through bloody hell with a goofy sidekick? Yes, please.

Supremacy MMA

Felice Herrig puts us in her world of hurt, and we couldn't be happier.

Ted Price

Our profile of this Insomniac legend will fill you with dreams of *Resistance 3* and *Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One*.

Upcoming Blu-ray and Games releases

Audrey sets her sights on the hottest Blu-rays this month!

Qore is free to PlayStation Plus subscribers.

Individual episodes can be purchased for $2.99 and a 13-episode subscription can be purchased for $24.99. Qore subscribers have access to Betas, demos, themes, and additional downloadable content each month.

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The PlayStation Entertainment Plan

Fill up your life with our monthly guide

SUNDAY **MONDAY** **TUESDAY** **WEDNESDAY** **THURSDAY** **FRIDAY** **SATURDAY**

JUN 01

Happy Birthday, Marilyn Monroe

Beauty just ain't what it used to be.

03

A First Class Welcome

X-Men: First Class hits theaters today. The fear of another crappy comic book movie hasn't stopped us from lining up for the midnight showing.

07

Heroes and Heroines

In stores today: *inFamous 2, Shadows of the Damned*, and *Supremacy MMA* (starring femme fighter Felice Herrig).

08

The Expo Formally Known as E3

E3 runs June 7–9. We're hoping *Grand Theft Auto: Disneyland* is finally announced.

09

Bonnaroo Celebrates 10 Years

What do Gogol Bordello, Mumford & Sons, Scissor Sisters, and Primus have in common? They're at Bonnaroo in Manchester, Tenn.

MUSIC & ARTS FESTIVAL
bonnaroo

14

Duke Nukem Forever, finally

Also in stores: *Child of Eden, Transformers: Dark of the Moon, Record of Agarest War Zero, Alice: Madness Returns*

16

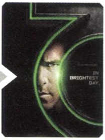
Christin Chi's Birthday

We humbly request that no one sends her poetry, locks of hair, or pictures of themselves taken in front of the bathroom mirror. Money is acceptable.

17

In brightest day, in blackest night...

The Green Lantern movie is finally here.



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Intern's 21st Birthday

We were gonna give Anne the day off, but since it's also Father's Day, we need her in the office. To do our jobs.

21

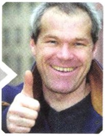
Summer Solstice

It's the first day of summer, which means it's time for cutoff jean shorts and sunbathing. We're beginning to see why our neighbor has that fence.

22

In the Name of the King

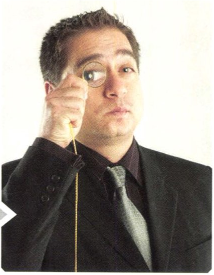
Uwe Boll, director of fine titles such as *House of the Dead* and *BloodRayne*, celebrates his birthday today.



30

Roger's Burchday

Is it coincidence that Roger's birthday is the same as Superman's? We think not. Roger, your secret is out.



* Release dates are subject to change by the publishers.

UNSANCTIONED. UNLICENSED. UNCOMPROMISING.

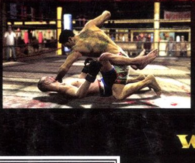
"Finally a game for those who think the UFC is just a bit too namby pamby and soft."
PlayStation: The Official Magazine

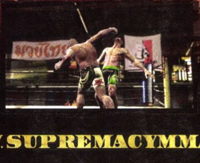
"Supremacy MMA fills in the blank between the brutality and popularity of MMA and the quickness and simplicity of arcade fighters."
Game Revolution

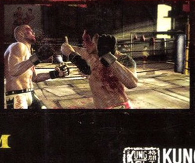
"Think of this game as being like the original *Mortal Kombat* or *Street Fighter 2*, but without the supernatural elements."
1Up.com

"The fighting looks intense, and the knockouts look brutal, something I felt *EA Sports' MMA* failed to do."
Destructoid

Supremacy
MMA
Lost Cause







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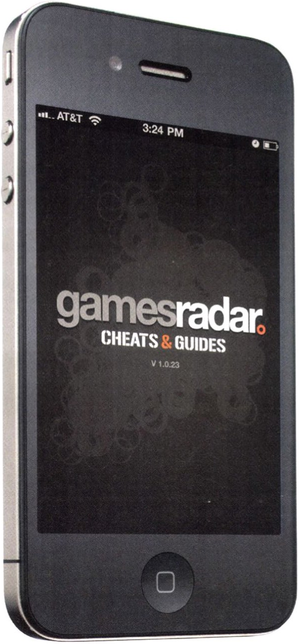

“★★★★★ GamesRadar is **FULL OF WIN**”
by Marcello Almaguer

“★★★★★ **AWESOMESAUCE!** Great app. I love!”
by June Martin

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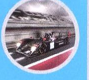
The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about

GT Academy
Driving school is in session. Late passes are for suckers.
»Page 12



Flash Hedgehog
Sonic meets Sonic? It happens in Sonic: Generations.
»Page 13

Spider-Men
Spider-Man dies! Not a hoax! Not a dream! Discover the tangled web.
»Page 14

Square Jams
Rapper Mega Ran offers mad rhymes for fantasic times.
»Page 19

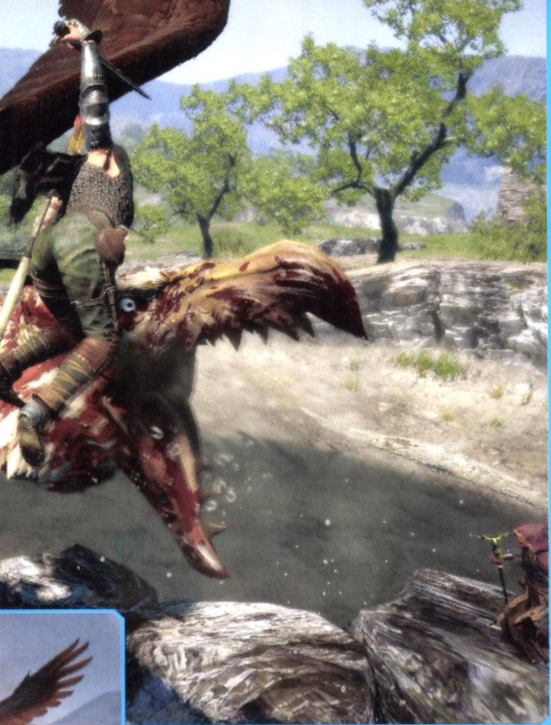
BLACK MATERIA

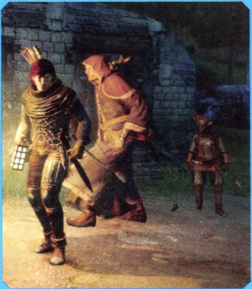
The Great Debate
Is too much never enough? PTOM editors debate game length.
»Page 22

1

A knight's tale

Capcom fires up the fantasy genre with Dragon's Dogma





From the makers of *Devil May Cry* comes...an open-world fantasy game? Strange, perhaps, but true: Hideaki Itsuno and Hiroyuki Kobayashi—both key members on Dante's third and fourth outings as well as *Resident Evil 4*—have joined forces to create *Dragon's Dogma*, a game filled with all the medieval dragons, magic, and knights of titles like *The Elder Scrolls: Oblivion* and *Dragon Age*. Think *Lord of the Rings* meets Greek mythology through the warped lens of a Japanese videogame.

But unlike *Dragon Age*, *Dogma* is not an RPG. Sure, we'll be able to select one of three classes (strider, mage, fighter) at the onset of the game and make key game-changing decisions throughout, but the focus rests squarely on the action. The game relies on the standard two-button, combo-based melee attack system (with a dash of third-person shooting via bow and arrow), but we can also recruit up to three "pawns" and issue basic commands during battle. Any character we encounter in the world can be recruited, and each is fully voiced and will be seamlessly incorporated into the narrative.

The other neat combat mechanic: a "grab" system that allows us to take hold of larger enemies. Imagine desperately scaling a massive griffin as it soars and dives to throw us off, or riding a hydra head as it flails wildly—that's the basic idea. Rather than waiting for bosses to expose a glowing weak spot, each battle turns into a more organic version of a *God of War* boss.

The epic adventure, set to release in 2012, will span an expansive open world, but the story begins when an ancient dragon—unseen for decades—suddenly attacks a small village and literally steals our heart. We survive, but we can hear the dragon in our thoughts encouraging us to come reclaim our pilfered organ. The attack, apparently, was not so random after all.

> "We are pouring all of our action-game experience into this title. It could be the greatest action game ever."
>
> **–Hideaki Itsuno**
> Director, Capcom

2

On the fast track

The nation's 16 fastest Gran Turismo 5 racers chase a dream

What are the odds that playing a videogame could lead to a real-life gig as a professional race driver? In the case of Sony's GT Academy, the online portion of the competition garnered 53,000 entrants when it went live last December.

After three elimination rounds, the gamers with the country's top 32 times gathered in March for the National Finals held in Orlando, Fla. What transpired during the two-day head-to-head event was a refreshing blend of camaraderie and sportsmanship, although during the races, the tension was palpable with the muted sound of revving virtual engines—underscored by an otherwise eerie hush—serving as the event's soundtrack.

In the end, 16 finalists prevailed to move on to the weeklong race camp portion of the competition to be held at the U.K.'s Silverstone circuit in June. The remaining competitors will compete in a series of mental, physical, and driving challenges that will be broadcast as a SPEED Channel reality show later this year. The winner of the final phase (based on a combination of talent, passion, drive, and dedication as determined by the judges) will enter an intense driver-training program, earn his race license, and compete as part of co-sponsor Nissan's endurance racing team in the 24 hours of Dubai next January.

Even more intriguing, Nissan North America's director of marketing Erich Marx stated the company may possibly field an all PlayStation-sourced team—composed of the three prior- and current-year European and the one U.S. GT Academy champions—for the race.

FRONTRUNNERS

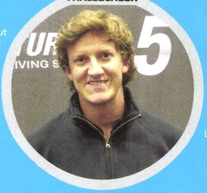
Bryan Heitkotter
(GTZf_CudaMan)
Age: 30
Fresno, Calif.
1st place finisher – 2011 GT Academy National Finals

"I'm a racer at heart. I bought a PS2 to play *Gran Turismo 3* when it came out, and I bought a PS3 just for *Gran Turismo 5*. But going forward to Silverstone, I'm sure having some experience driving a physical car at the limit is going to be valuable."

Christopher Roberts
(Dr_3Wide_Skills)
Age: 19
Champlain, NY
2nd place finisher – 2011 GT Academy National Finals

"In England, we'll be in real cars and they'll be mentally and physically challenging us. A lot of people underestimate how strong and in shape race car drivers need to be. My game plan now is to hit the gym and do cardio every day."

TRAILBLAZER



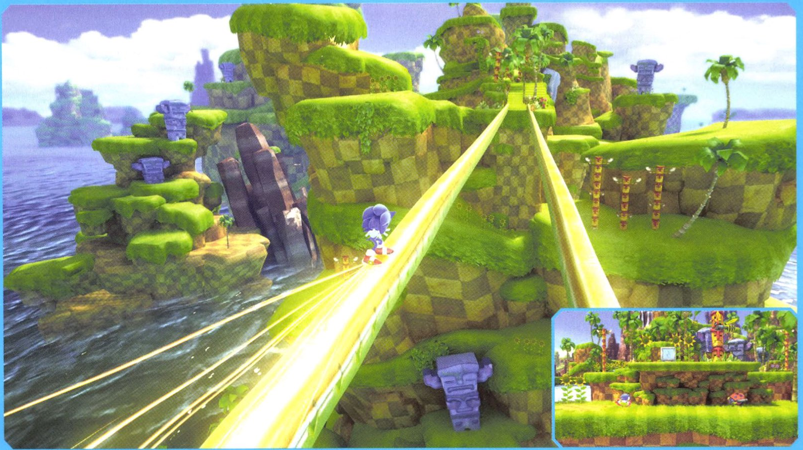
"A lot of the guys are fast, but they're not used to driving in front of people, the media, and cameras, so they make mistakes. They have to focus and stay calm—be professional—to win."

Lucas Ordoñez
Age: 25
Madrid, Spain
2008 GT Academy competition winner
Currently racing LMP2-class sports car with the Signatech Nissan team in the Intercontinental Le Mans Cup series.

SWEET 16TH

Jose Sebastian Cedeno
(SebaF1)
Age: 22
Charlotte, N.C.
16th place finisher – 2011 GT Academy National Finals

Cedeno claimed the final available spot in the national competition, but the entire field of 16 will be entering GT Academy's final phase with a clean slate. Any one of the remaining contenders competing at Silverstone could emerge victorious.



3

He hasn't lost a step

Sega celebrates 20 years of speed and spin dashes with Sonic Generations

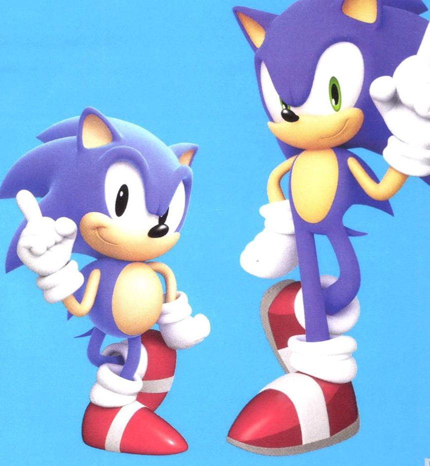
It's hard to believe, but our favorite blue speed-demon has become a vicenarian. As part of a year-long celebration honoring 20 years of Sonic the Hedgehog titles, Sega is working on *Sonic Generations*, an all-new game described as a medley of the best levels and gameplay moments from the last two decades.

But *Generations* isn't a simple best-of rehash; there will be a 2D and 3D version of each featured level with an overarching storyline fusing the disparate elements into a fresh adventure. While the levels appear to be detailed high-definition knockoffs of their original versions, they are actually new interpretations filled with iconic elements and new twists on familiar gameplay scenarios.

Our early look at *Generations* centered on the Green Hill Zone from the original 1991 game. As fans have been clamoring for, the 2D stage features the huskier, classic black-eyed Sonic blazing his way through a drop-dead gorgeous representation of the level. The most apparent visual enhancement is the background detail, but it's the sheer speed and responsiveness exhibited during gameplay that will truly delight fans.

The svelte, green-eyed modern Sonic is highlighted in the 3D Green Hill Zone. Sonic has had his struggles adapting to gameplay in the third dimension, but the playstyle here recalls last year's well-received Wii game, *Sonic Colors*. Traditionalists may prefer the platforming perfection of 2D Sonic, but there's no denying that the 3D gameplay is finally capturing the spirit and execution of the early franchise classics.

Look to celebrate some great memories with an old friend later this year.



4 Stop! Spider-Time!

Spider-Men tackle Edge of Time

> "Every place where he grunts, I wrote that grunt. Ugh! Ow! Ehhh! It's all me, baby."
>
> —**Peter David**
> Writer, *Spider-Man: Edge of Time*

"It's so cool, we don't even need the air conditioning," Peter David says about *Spider-Man: Edge of Time.* David, a comic book writer who's tackled books from *Amazing Spider-Man* to *X-Factor*, is staring at a TV screen, watching an animated Spider-Man 2099 cradle a limp, bloody, and seemingly dead Amazing Spider-Man in his arms.

David will be contributing the script for *Time*, and Canadian developer Beenox (*Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions*) has been enlisted once again for the gameplay. Both Beenox and David describe the relationship as highly collaborative. "The tremendous advantage of that to me," David says, "is that anything that people like in the game I can claim credit for, and anything they don't like I can go, 'Ah, that was Beenox and Marvel. *What are you going to do?*'"

Two Spider-Men unite for the singular purpose of stopping the modern-day Spidey's death in Activision's *Time*. The game, slated to release later this year, will take place wholly inside the confines of a mega-skyscraper, the headquarters of a mysterious, altogether arachnid-hostile conglomerate Alchemax, and allows us to alternate between gameplay with both the modern-day, web-shooting, wall-crawling Spider-Man and his futuristic counterpart.

In this new, alternate reality, New York has been transformed. Lady Liberty's blouse and inviting torch of freedom have been replaced with body armor and a terrible, presumably swift, sword. The Daily Bugle's motto, "It's everyone's holo paper," has been altered so it now reads: "Start your career as a human trial subject."

This grim existence is the perfect inspiration for some superheroic introspection. "A hero has no future if he has no past," Spider-Man 2099 muses. "So we must defy time itself, together." This means, generally, face-punching aplenty. With *Time* it also means picture-in-picture, cause-and-effect gameplay wherein each hero can affect the other's world. "The player [as the original Spider-Man] can actually see what he's doing in one of the timelines, and see how it effects the timeline in the 2099 universe," says Beenox's creative director Gerard Lehiany. We get to see this in action, as Spider-Man assaults pieces of a giant robot in our present while Spider-Man 2099 battles the completed behemoth in the future. As Spider-Man struggles and groans mightily to take the robot apart, 2099 eggs him on in the picture within a picture, encouraging his efforts to move faster.

Beenox promises new and classic Spidey villains, including one that seems to be a takeoff of his traditional foe, the Green Goblin. In addition, the Spider-Men will both display new abilities, such as an auto-dodge that's both upgradeable and functional during combat and ordinary navigation.

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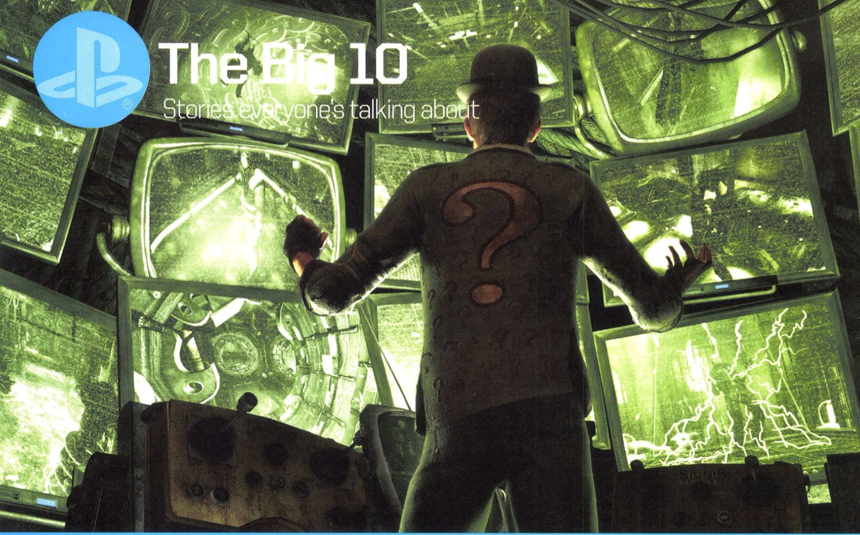


5 Riddle us this

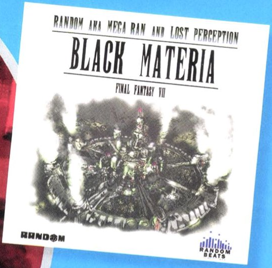
E. Nigma takes a more active role in Arkham City

Edward Nigma, Batman's longtime foe, won't be content with hiding any longer. Nigma, better known as The Riddler, was a central figure in 2009's *Batman: Arkham Asylum*, yet he never appeared to menace Batman. Instead, he presented riddles to the Caped Crusader, puzzles the player needed to scan using the hero's visor set to its Detective mode. There were also Riddler trophies to collect, and these elements, once solved or collected, unlocked new items and provided experience points.

The riddles and trophies are returning for *Batman: Arkham City*. So is The Riddler himself, but this time he'll be playing a more active role.

For starters, Riddler trophies are now booby-trapped. Many require Batman to retrieve them with his grappling gun. And The Riddler will now have his own lickspittles—warm bodies we'll need to lump up in order to find the locations of clues. Most disturbingly, during a recent demo, we saw Batman using his cryptographic sequencer gadget to hack into a signal (its frequency conveniently tacked onto a billboard on a Gotham rooftop) controlled by The Riddler. Once the signal was locked in, a cutscene played revealing Nigma lording it over Batman, while simultaneously threatening hostages he'd taken.

This is a new, more dangerous Riddler. And he'll be taking the stage alongside some of Batman's premier foes such as The Joker, Mr. Freeze, Killer Croc, and The Penguin come October.



> "Sephiroth, steppin' off, kept it off, weapons off, any cost, let ya' cross... Easy!"

6 Rapper's delight

Hardcore gamer infuses hip-hop with Final Fantasy

Hardcore gamers are a fervent bunch, but rapper Random (a.k.a. Mega Ran) takes his fandom to a whole new level. When he's not teaching middle-school English, the 33-year-old Phoenix, Ariz., resident makes hip-hop music based on his favorite videogames. His latest disc is based on RPG fan-favorite *Final Fantasy VII*.

"*Final Fantasy VII* was an extremely influential game for me," says Random. "When I saw my friend playing it for the first time, I was immediately sucked into the storyline, the graphics, the music—I had to have it."

Now 14 years later, Random mixes the original *Final Fantasy* music from composer Nobuo Uematsu and infuses it with head-noddin' hip-hop beats and clever, reference-heavy rhymes. And while Random's passion for *Final Fantasy* made it a labor of love, it wasn't always easy to find lines that rhyme. (What rhymes with "Sephiroth"?)

"Sephiroth, steppin' off, kept it off, weapons off, any cost, let ya' cross... Easy!" jokes Random, who went through multiple playthroughs for lyrical inspiration. "Since I was playing the game at the time that I was working on it—for like the fourth time—it was pretty fresh on my mind. It was a little difficult, but I welcome the challenge of stuff like that. I love the fact that it was so challenging, because no one has ever done it before."

Although Random is still teaching, his music venture has paid off. After hearing his Mega Man tribute album *Mega Ran* on MySpace, Capcom entered into a licensing deal with him. He now travels to Capcom events, where he performs his music and hangs out with like-minded gamers.

"[It's like] living my dreams," Random said of his relationship with Capcom. "I'm very happy with their decision to bring me on board. It's still pretty surreal to think about it. I played their games my entire childhood, and now they know who I am—unreal. And it sure beats getting sued!"

Black Materia: Final Fantasy VII is now available on iTunes; find out more about Random and his music at his official website, megaran.com.

7 Back in rhythm

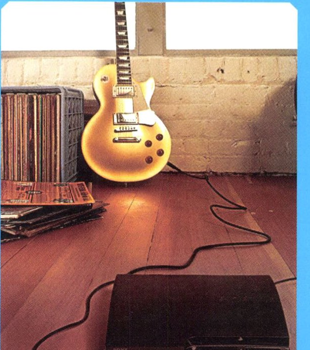
Rocksmith wants gamers to face the music

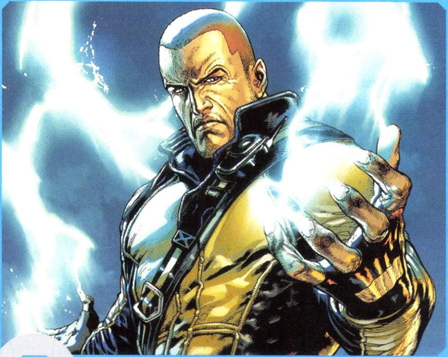
Perhaps the most impressive moment in our *Rocksmith* demo came immediately. Using a simple 1/4-inch-to-USB dongle, we plugged a standard electric guitar into the PS3. We strummed the strings, and out came the massive, room-shaking growl of the electric guitar, exactly as played. *Rock Band 3* and even the lowly *Power Gig* motioned in this direction, but with *Rocksmith*, we can hook *any* electric guitar into to a PS3 and use it as a fully functioning amplifier.

Ubisoft doesn't intend to simulate what it's like to play guitar with *Rocksmith*; instead, it wants to teach users how to really, truly play guitar. Its presentation is a slight variant on the traditional "highway" of notes; wherever a note appears on the virtual fret board, that's where the player's fingers should be on the actual guitar.

Unlike other music games, the audio doesn't cut out when a note is missed, nor will points be deducted for playing extra notes; it encourages experimentation instead of penalizing it. There's no way to "fail" out of a song; instead, *Rocksmith's* difficulty level automatically adapts to how we're playing, displaying more notes only when we demonstrate the aptitude for them. Parts of songs can be looped and slowed down, picking up speed each time they're played.

Progression through the game's career mode unlocks additional amps and effects pedals to make the guitar sound dramatically different, and an additional mode turns learning into a series of small but fun minigames—meant to teach various tools of the trade, from scales to muscle memory of frets and chords. Two versions of *Rocksmith* will ship in September: one with the game and the required converter cable, the other a bundle that includes a Gibson guitar.





8 Harm's way

Writer Bill Harms makes Cole MacGrath infamous

With the hotly anticipated *inFamous 2* just on the horizon, we sat down to ask Bill Harms, writer of the first game, about his six-issue *inFamous* comic-book series from DC Comics, currently on sale.

How does the character of Cole evolve from the conclusion of the first game during the comic-book series?

In the first game, Cole is very much a reluctant superhero. He's pushed and pulled in different directions by forces beyond his control, and he never really has a moment to sit back and reflect on what's happened to him. One of my goals with the comic was to take Cole to the next step in his evolution as a hero and a person. By the end of the comic, Cole goes from reluctant hero to willing hero. He's fully accepted who and what he is.

How will this series bridge the gap between the games?

The story in the comic begins shortly after the end of the first game and ends with the first contact between Cole and Kuo. In between, a lot of the dangling story threads from the game, such as the fate of Alden, are sewn up. Those are the things that fans of the first game will really enjoy. That said, one of our big goals with the comic was to tell a story that's accessible to everyone, not just people who played the first game. Part of that was creating new characters, like David, who only appear in the comic.

What familiar faces from *inFamous* will pop up before the end of the series?

All of the main characters make an appearance, with the exception of John. Sasha and Moya have large roles, as does Zeke. One of the fun things about writing the comic was really expanding Moya as a character and showing how she and Kessler were in cahoots from the very beginning.

Do you have any future plans for Cole in the realm of *inFamous* comics?

As far as I know, there aren't any plans for another comic-book series, but I'd certainly be up for it!

9 The Readers' Most Wanted

Cole MacGrath: superstar. After months of lurking around the upper echelons of our charts, PlayStation's homegrown hero finally charged his way to the top spot. And it's about time. With new powers and a much deeper morality system, *inFamous 2* is set to deliver a summer blockbuster. Meanwhile, Sony's other heroes (and villains) dominate the top three, with the Dark Knight ready to recapture his rightful place once Cole has come home for good.

01 *inFamous 2*
02 *Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception*
03 *Twisted Metal*
04 *Batman: Arkham City*
05 *Final Fantasy XIII-2*
06 *Resistance 3*
07 *NCAA Football 12*
08 *Battlefield 3*
09 *Mass Effect 3*
10 *FEAR 3*
11 *Final Fantasy XIV*
12 *Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One*
13 *Max Payne 3*
14 *Duke Nukem Forever*
15 *Ico / Shadow of the Colossus Collection*
16 *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim*
17 *The Lord of the Rings: War in the North*
18 *Red Faction: Armageddon*
19 *The Last Guardian*
20 *L.A. Noire*

TWISTED METAL

BATMAN: ARKHAM CITY

Stats in this chart appear courtesy of OTX Research. All games are PS3 titles scheduled to release after May 1, 2011. Polling period was March 20, 2011, to April 2, 2011.

10 Are games becoming too short?

Yes

Says the time hungry **Roger Burchill**

A couple of years ago, I railed on in the pages of this very magazine about the travesty of 10-hour games. Whatever happened to games offering 15 to 25 hours of our favorite pastime? Why were so many gamers accepting of the notion of getting less when they were paying higher prices than ever? But even among our staff, I found little support: most had no problem with shorter spurts of brilliant gameplay.

Well, of course, great gameplay will always satisfy whether it's offered in generous or meager portions. But who marketed the idea that we're not allowed to want more of a good thing? And just how many deathmatch variations have to be created before we all admit that multiplayer is now just a bullet point for a game's box? As for DLC, the *Burnout Paradise* heyday is over; it'll cost you another 10 bucks to enter the land of milk and honey these days.

The truth is, with the single-digit hour campaigns of games like *Homefront* and even the excellent *Killzone 3*, I've now begun to long for those 10-hour games. It's given me a fresh appreciation for the value-quotient of games like *Just Cause 2,* and the *LEGO* and *Yakuza* series. Their gameplay may not always remain consistently fresh throughout, but at least I'll still have something to play with at the end of the *half*-day—besides an empty wallet, that is.

No

Says the temporally tested **Greg Orlando**

We're all big on value. The line at the all-you-can-eat buffet is ample proof of our cost consciousness.

Sometimes, though, we let our desire for value supersede our—how should I put this?—*sanity.* Our need for more has consumed us, to the point where we're willing to accept that more—even if it's more crap served on a garbage-can plate—is always better.

THQ's *Homefront* was, give or take, a six-hour campaign. There was outrage over this, so much so former U.S. President William Howard Taft rolled over in his grave despite having nothing to do with the game.

Somewhere along the line we began to equate more with value and value with quality. A six-hour game could potentially be good, but *ah!* a seven-hour game is more and thus better. And if *Homefront* had been 20 hours, we could have given it two solid-gold thumbs up without even playing it.

Now, we can adopt this "more is better" philosophy only if every one of us is willing to devote our valuable slacking-off time to pointless fetch quests, minigames *ad nauseam*, backtracking through stages we've already completed, and padding enough to supply The Mattress King and his royal court. Or we can accept that sometimes less is more, and quality—especially as it applies to videogames—has nothing to do with time served.

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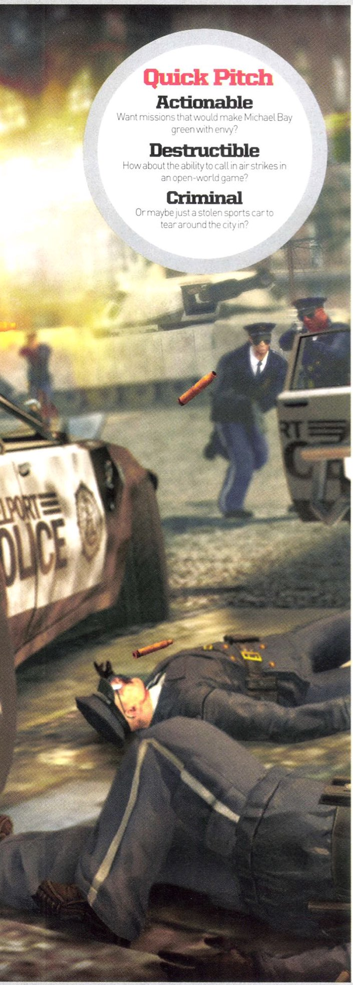


Quick Pitch

Actionable
Want missions that would make Michael Bay green with envy?

Destructible
How about the ability to call in air strikes in an open-world game?

Criminal
Or maybe just a stolen sports car to tear around the city in?

FIRST LOOK Format **PS3** ETA **Holiday** Pub **THQ** Dev **Volition**

Saints Row The Third

Growing up in the all the right ways

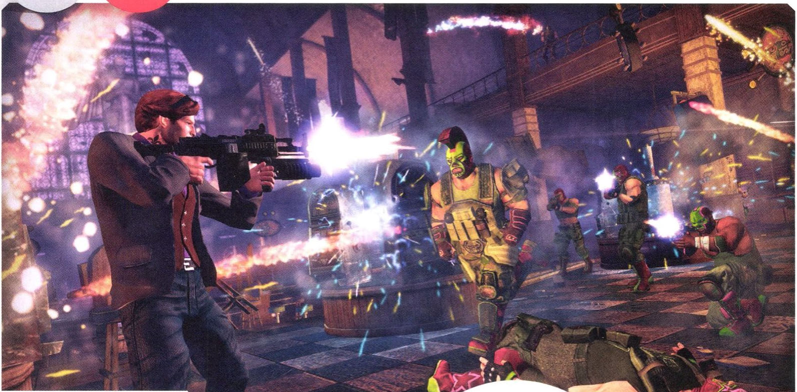
For the record, *Saints Row: The Third* senior producer Greg Donovan was being facetious when he said, "'Should we have farts in a jar?' Those are the kinds of discussions we're having." But considering the demo we'd seen just minutes before, a few jars of hot, stinky methane wouldn't seem too out of place.

We giggled as Donovan used the "remote control gun" to slyly hijack a rival gang's car and slam it into a police truck—which, of course, kicked off a raging gun battle, allowing us to chillax as our enemies unwittingly eliminated one another. We winced as he clobbered a bedizened businessman with an outrageously oversized phallus before rolling over his victim's back and planting his foot squarely in the man's junk. We pumped our fists as he sprinted toward a swag sports car and dove feet-first through the windshield, landing effortlessly in the driver seat.

Saints Row has always been the antidote to *Grand Theft Auto's* self-serious, hard-boiled attitude, and *The Third*, is no different. Intentionally, almost willfully crass, idiotic, and outrageous, it's positioned to once again assert the series as the unapologetically fun flipside of the sandbox-shooter coin. But don't be fooled by the copious nutshots and comical exaggeration. As with any class clown, *The Third* isn't nearly as dumb as it looks.

Gang of Four

Surprisingly, it looks pretty darn good. The lackluster graphics of *Saints Row 2* have been traded in for some shiny new visuals that elevate the series to next-gen status: realistic lighting, a noticeably higher level of detail, and a slightly less cartoonish (though still vibrantly stylized) aesthetic help paint a more convincing world without compromising the franchise's sophomoric vibe. ▸▸



The Third lets us run around in nothing more than a well-placed patch of pixelation if we choose. We choose clothing, thank you very much.

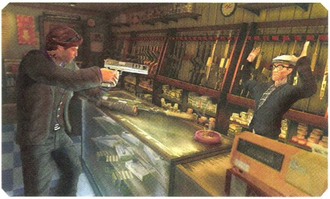
With the new visuals come a new city and a new story: Steelport, as with the real-life city of Detroit, has fallen on hard times. As industry dried up, a violent criminal element moved in and took over, transforming the blue-collar town into a nexus of iniquity. Drugs, prostitution, and gambling became the only trades, with the citizens left to suffer at the hands of the Syndicate—a shady organization composed of three gangs: a group of angst-ridden hackers called the Deckers; a collection of colorful enforcers known as the Luchadores; and a mob of ruthless businessmen, the Morning Star.

If Syndicate leader Phillipe Loren had his way, the Saints would have been the fourth member, but our character (the leader of the Saints) had other plans. After the Saints attempted to rob a Syndicate bank, Loren—annoyed but impressed—invited our gang to join his evil coalition...on the condition we fork over a huge portion of any future profits. Naturally, we told him to shove it and resolved to take Steelport for ourselves instead. What happens beyond that remains a mystery, but Donovan assures us players would make "major, major decisions" that dictate the ending they'll see when all is said and done.

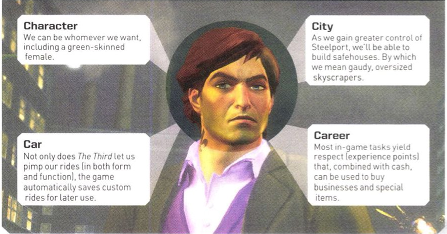
Weapons can be upgraded just like vehicles. Just don't go all *Full Metal Jacket* on us, okay?

Street Fighters

Wrestling an entire city away from three rival gangs will be a lot of work,



Who are you? Build a thug

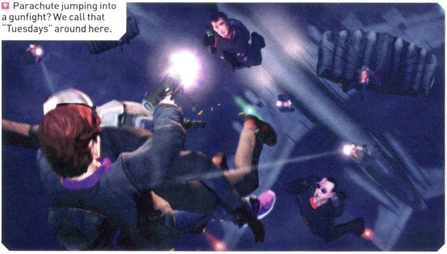


Character
We can be whomever we want, including a green-skinned female.

City
As we gain greater control of Steelport, we'll be able to build safehouses. By which we mean gaudy, oversized skyscrapers.

Car
Not only does *The Third* let us pimp our rides (in both form and function), the game automatically saves custom rides for later use.

Career
Most in-game tasks yield respect (experience points) that, combined with cash, can be used to buy businesses and special items.



Parachute jumping into a gunfight? We call that "Tuesdays" around here.

Steelport's ratty alleyways are a bustle of activity and always a fun time for tourists seeking to sample the local culture. We recommend Kevlar and an Uzi for sightseeing excursions.

Silly hookers! You can't outrun bullets or the fashion police.

which means we'll have plenty of tasks to tackle while exploring Steelport's mean streets. Flashpoints, for example, are random pockets of rival gang members we must clear out to gain greater control over a particular district. Donovan demonstrated how to handle a Flashpoint by calling in a missile to rain fire down on a crowd of loitering thugs. It was, um, very effective. And awesome.

Then there are the Mayhem side-missions—challenges triggered by glowing icons found floating around the city. While Flashpoints emerge organically, Mayhem missions often change game conditions and feel more like their own distinct minigames. The mission we encountered spawned a *tank* and had us rack up as much damage as possible before the Army showed up for some tank-on-tank action. Clearly *The Third* has no problem serving up all the most impressive weapons and hardware whenever possible.

Story missions, according to Donovan, will be far more diverse this time around. While just 10 percent of the missions in *Saints Row 2* offered genuinely unique activities, the developers are aiming to provide something fresh and unexpected for a whopping 75 percent of all missions in *The Third*. From what we've seen so far, they're off to a roaring start.

> The mission we encountered spawned a *tank* and had us rack up as much damage as possible.

Die Harder-er

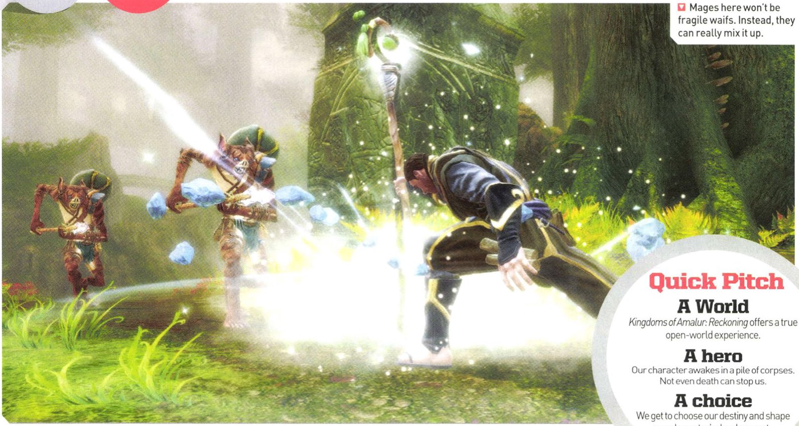
The game's second mission opens with straightforward over-the-shoulder shooting (with liberal use of human shields) as we make our way to the cargo bay of an airborne jumbo jet. But once the cargo lift opens, we must pick off bad guys and avoid debris *while plummeting toward Earth*. The mission then ends with a cutscene in which our character uses his momentum to kung-fu kick through the plane's windshield, waste a few more enemies as he slingshots through the cabin, and blast out through the cargo door again before catching his falling partner and pulling his chute. It's very James Bond.

With such a dramatically over-the-top and unserious approach—as well as a full drop-in/drop-out cooperative campaign—*Third* could reinvigorate the open-world shooter genre when it storms onto shelves this holiday season. We just hope *Grand Theft Auto V* can keep up. SCOTT BUTTERWORTH

Dev Talk

"We know this franchise. We know what works."

Greg Donovan
Senior Producer



Mages here won't be fragile waifs. Instead, they can really mix it up.

Quick Pitch

A World

Kingdoms of Amalur: Reckoning offers a true open-world experience.

A hero

Our character awakes in a pile of corpses. Not even death can stop us.

A choice

We get to choose our destiny and shape our character's development.

A-Team

Curt Schilling
CEO
Former pitcher now runs 38 Studios

Todd McFarlane
Exec. Art Director
Spawn creator heads the art team

R.A. Salvatore
Exec. Creator of Worlds
Fantasy novelist crafted the story

FIRST LOOK Format **PS3** ETA **2012** Pub **Electronic Arts** Dev **38 Studios**

Kingdoms of Amalur Reckoning

Schilling for an open-world adventure

Death can't stop us in *Kingdoms of Amalur: Reckoning*. We start the game in a pile of corpses, the first successful resurrection this world has ever seen. Everyone else has a destiny, a path they must follow, but not us. We're the *tabula rasa*, the blank slate. We have no destiny and, thus, are forced to make our own.

Curt Schilling, former major league baseball pitcher and now CEO of development house 38 Studios, will not talk about the reckoning in *Kingdoms of Amalur*. Neither will the game's creative director Mark Nelson. This is odd, of course, because the game will hinge on this reckoning; it's the plot's focal point and we can only guess it has something to do with our character's miraculous defeat of death.

We'll be able to customize our hero by sex and race; the game allows for four varieties of elves and humans. We also get to select a patron god, and these selections will affect both the story and our character's statistics. Further customization options allow us to fine-tune all elements of our character's appearance, right down to the eye shadow darkness and tattoo intensity. "We want you to like the character you choose and may play for 100 hours," says Nelson.

Destiny Awaits

"The first kind of personal missions you have are to figure out how you ended up dead in the first place," Nelson says, "and how the heck you've now come back to life." Tied into this is the game's destiny system, which allows us to augment our character in many different ways. We're not forced to choose a character class, but can instead create our own, fusing elements of magecraft, finesse, and melee combat. Our hero is built from selections on an ability tree, and the way we allot our given points unlocks new "destinies," allowing us to become, for example, a hybrid battlemage or a brutish warlord.

Each character will play differently according to his destiny. Heroes with a more magical bent can utilize a teleport maneuver to avoid attacks whereas warriors will simply dodge and roll. We can blend elements to create all manner of fusions, but if we choose, say, a traditional magician's

Reckoning looks to contain all the traditional RPG elements we know and love, interpreted in a whole new manner.

> "We have no destiny and, thus, are forced to make our own."

route, we won't be forced into a traditional magician's role. Nelson points to the wizard's staff as specific evidence of this. "This is a weapon that's fleshed out just as much as any of the warrior's weapons," he says. "It has the exact same depth and it has its special attacks, its different attack chains, it has parry attacks—all of these things are built into a mage's weapon as well, so he doesn't spend his life walking backward through a dungeon trying not to get hit while shooting a fireball."

Open Up, Amalur

Open-world, action-heavy RPGs are now commonplace, but *Reckoning* seems to grasp the concept that exploring an immense world in any way we see fit is no fun if veering off its well-traveled paths reveals...nothing. Schilling shares that concern, and promises his game will deliver a true open-world experience, with something unexpected or someone new to interact with anytime we venture off the yellow brick road.

A brief glimpse of Amalur reveals a world we want to adventure in—even the ugly parts with monsters that vomit up other monsters with disgusting burping sounds. It's all very beautiful, and we're heartened by the philosophy behind its creation and design. "You're always going to be asked to defend the world and save the world in an RPG," the game's story creator R.A. Salvatore is fond of saying. "It better be someplace that you care about defending."

GREG ORLANDO

Dev Talk

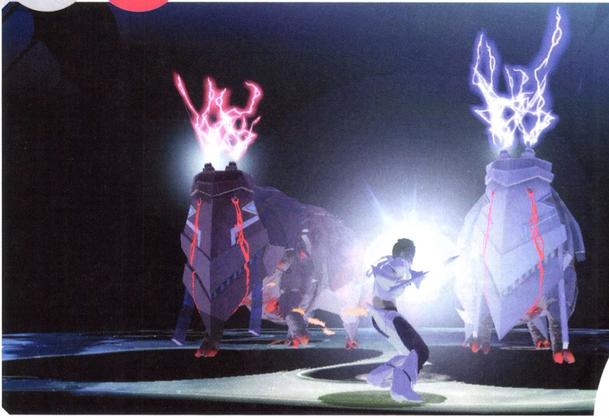
"We want that moment-to-moment experience to be fun—have combat be a good time, all the time."

Mark Nelson
Creative Director

It came from 38 Studios Look on these works, ye mighty!

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS
LEGEND of DRIZZT
NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR
R.A. SALVATORE
THE DEMON AWAKENS

Here's what Curt Schilling, Todd McFarlane, and R.A. Salvatore have wrought: 216 wins, three World Series rings, *Spawn*, board games, and 22 best-sellers.



HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **Summer** Pub **Ignition Entertainment** Dev **Ignition Entertainment**

El Shaddai

Ascension of the Metatron

We're on a mission from God

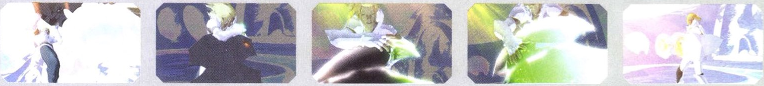
▲ We are entranced by its lovely pink eye. Could it be, we have finally found love in a gender-ambiguous game character?

After 200 years of searching—represented by the initial two acts in *El Shaddai: Ascension of the Metatron*—we have finally reached the Tower of Babel. We're immediately struck by the colorful and endless expanse of space in the tower's first level, with a horizon that blends in with the ground, and a watery feel to the world beneath our feet. Ezekiel, the renegade angel obsessed with natural beauty, has warped this environment into a surrealistic countryside.

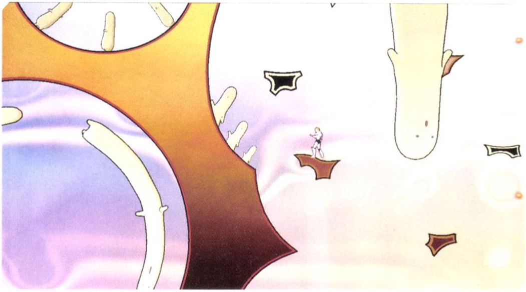
"Nothing you see in this game is supposed to be realistic," says Shane Bettenhausen, new business development director for Ignition Entertainment. Prying ourselves away from staring at the bizarre landscape, we push and punch our way deeper into Ezekiel's uniquely distorted vision of utopia.

Loosely based on The Book of Enoch, *El Shaddai* is a third-person adventure with intense combat and tricky platforming. We play as Enoch, a human sent to Babel by God to capture seven renegade angels who have been tainted by their love for humanity. Should we fail, God will unleash a great flood to stop the humans and angels from intermingling. It's heady stuff: apocryphal aspects of western religion as seen through a Japanese filter. When prodded for more information, Bettenhausen instead

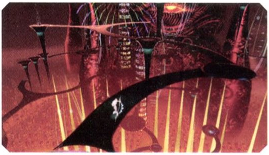
Purify this Not just to keep it pretty, but to maintain functionality

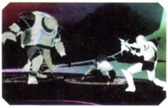


After Enoch steals a weapon, he must cleanse it before it can be of use to him. In time, it will become defiled, and Enoch will need to lather, rinse, and repeat.



▲ We are fairly certain those oddly shaped Nephilim don't wish us harm, but it would be just our luck to get stabbed in the back by something adorable.





> "I could give you a midterm exam on the backstory of this game."

tells us, "I could give you a midterm exam on the backstory of this game. It's that complex."

Enoch isn't alone on this mission. Lucifel, an angel who exists outside of time—and a lover of designer clothing—aids us on our journey. He supplies us with armor as well as clues, and saves our progress by calling God on his cell phone, a device that won't be invented for a couple thousand years.

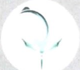
Soldier of God

Waiting in the next area is an arena-type battle during which we gain our first weapon: the bladed Arch. Combat is smooth and combos flow easily from one into another. Though there's only an attack, a block, and a jump button, the timing between each strike creates numerous possibilities for combinations. The battle is reminiscent of *Devil May Cry*, and after a few well-timed hits we're able to steal the Arch away from the enemy and cleanse it for our own purposes. Periodically we will need to purify our weapon to ensure it doesn't get tainted, though we're vulnerable when doing so.

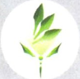
Rather than an onscreen display of our health, chunks of our armor break off as we take damage until we are left wearing only our designer jeans (a gift from Lucifel). The battles start out simply enough, but as the game progresses they take on an almost *Ninja Gaiden* level of difficulty, with controller-tossing rage staved off only by the ability to return to life in battle by furiously mashing all of our action buttons. With each near-death experience it becomes more difficult to make a return.

An impressive visual experience with a twist on familiar Japanese action games, *El Shaddai* is shaping up to deliver the gameplay depth to match its gorgeous looks. The gods should be pleased this summer. ANNE LEWIS

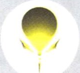
Triple Threat



Arch
A powerful bladed weapon, the Arch also gives players the ability to float gently down from a jump—helpful during platforming sequences.



Gale
A projectile weapon, the Gale takes the longest to purify. It's the weakest weapon, but includes an aerial dash necessary to reach inaccessible areas.



Veil
A slow, heavy device that doubles as a shield, it's easily the game's strongest weapon. These gauntlets work best up close and personal.

Could Be a Contender

Format **PS3** ETA **June** Pub **505 Games**
Dev **Kung Fu Factory**

Supremacy MMA

Bloody fun beatdowns

The Premise

Grown men and women pummeling one another in one-on-one fights of varying legality, in arenas both professional and otherwise, may well provide an entertaining gaming experience.

The Reality

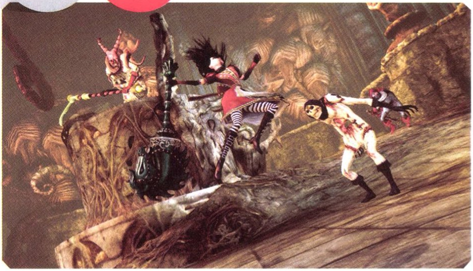
With other, more established entrants from Electronic Arts and THQ, *Supremacy MMA* has its work cut out.

The Hook

Offering a mix of fighting styles, *Supremacy* has us eager to see how, say, Savate stacks up against Muay Thai. Oh, and its story mode is rife with excessive brutality (including blood smears, broken bones, and delightfully illegal maneuvers such as the head stomp). Plus, it's got a mode wherein women can pummel one another—an intriguing addition to the MMA canon.

The Chances

We'd say *Supremacy MMA* has a puncher's chance.



HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **June** Pub **Electronic Arts** Dev **Spicy Horse**

Alice
Madness Returns

This is a head trip 11 years in the making. *Alice: Madness Returns* continues the third-person adventure begun in the PC game *American McGee's Alice*, with a now 20-something Alice Liddell—from Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass, and What Alice Found There*—released from the asylum, still haunted by the death of her parents.

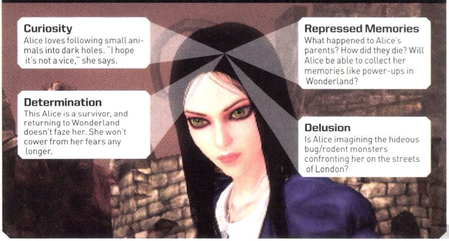
"I think everyone wants to know what happened next in Alice's life when she grew up," says the game's executive producer R.J. Berg. "She's an adult woman with an adult woman's concerns about her past and this tragedy that has befallen her."

Wonderland initially appears idyllic, complete with butterflies, blossoming flowers, and waterfalls, but quickly disintegrates. The sense of corruption here is tangible, and developer Spicy Horse perfectly captures the relationship between Liddell's troubled mind and her surroundings; creepy tar babies appear with fire-belching machinery on their backs, and when our heroine gets to the Mad Hatter's realm, her outfit changes to standard-issue black Goth-wear. We get to eviscerate foes with clockwork bombs, a bloody Vorpal blade, and a pepper grinder, with the weapons upgradeable by collecting, in perfectly gruesome fashion, teeth.

Liddell can grow or shrink, which comes in handy here. Growth enables her to take on multiple foes with ease, while shrinking allows her to see hidden objects and travel through keyholes. When weakened, she can tap into her inner fury and become invincible; the game shifts to three-color format (black, white, and red) for a brief period, allowing for unfettered slaughter. The effect is as unsettling as the developers intended.

"Alice left Wonderland, but she did not solve the problem," says Berg. "Wonderland, a place of security, refuge, escape—all the things that we associate with that marvelous place—began to collapse. Her retreat is not satisfying any longer. That world begins to morph into a reflection of what she sees in the real world and the problems that she has in dealing with those things." TRACEY JOHN

Mind matters A cerebral plunge



Curiosity
Alice loves following small animals into dark holes. "I hope it's not a vice," she says.

Determination
This Alice is a survivor, and returning to Wonderland doesn't faze her. She won't cower from her fears any longer.

Repressed Memories
What happened to Alice's parents? How did they die? Will Alice be able to collect her memories like power-ups in Wonderland?

Delusion
Is Alice imagining the hideous bug/rodent monsters confronting her on the streets of London?

Is this new Wonderland a reflection of Alice's deteriorating mental state?

Becoming a giant has its perks. Chief among them: The WWE is always hiring. Also, the New York Knicks need (in no particular order): A center, two forwards, and two guards.

Specters can take control of soldiers. Soldiers can shoot specters.

HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **May** Pub **Warner Bros. Interactive Ent.** Dev **Day 1 Studios**

FEAR 3

Someone needs an epidural

Creepy witch woman Alma is having her contractions and, well, this won't end pleasantly for anyone. We're hauling ass, carrying weapon-laden crates to a safe zone, knowing full well the next time Alma's spasms occur, it'll spawn a wave of creepy monsters. Alma's out there, too, and if we look directly at her, she'll punish us thusly.

Aside from its solo or cooperative story adventure featuring soldier Point Man and his now-dead brother Fettel, *FEAR 3* offers a series of intense, horror-themed multiplayer campaigns. Contractions serves as a survival mode; we and three others play to see how long we can hold out against wave after wave of horrors. During the mode's brief lulls, we're made to either retrieve weapon crates—some of which hold special guns such as the fire-bolt-firing Penetrator or repair barricades. There's a mode emphasizing haste, the aptly named F**king Run, wherein we need to run a gauntlet, shoot enemies, and avoid a rapidly onrushing wall of death. Two other modes, Soul Survivor and Soul King, utilize a possession mechanic wherein we, as an otherworldly specter, can take over the body of a living being. Survivor requires us to either avoid possession or, as a specter, corrupt everyone; as a player in King, we need to collect souls and accumulate points.

These multiplayer modes don't offer strict horror, not hardly. They're far too frantic and harried to allow for well-timed (or otherwise) frights. Instead, the developers put their emphasis on creating a sense of urgency, whether it's with the Souls' smaller maps and little opportunity to hide and/or rest or with the ever-present threat of crushing by an unstoppable wall of doom. Color us unafraid, but intrigued. GREG ORLANDO

HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **May** Pub **Sega** Dev **Next Level Games**

Captain America

Super Soldier

Like mom and apple pie

Sacrilege! Captain America does not get to punch Nazis in their stupid Nazi faces in *Captain America: Super Soldier*. Captain America, for the uninitiated, got his start punching and, yes, *shooting* Nazis back in the 1940s. It's his *raison d'etre*.

As America endures, so shall its patriotic comic-book hero. The villainous conglomerate Hydra steps in to take the place of the Nazis and, if nothing else, we'll get to punch the nefarious Red Skull—dictator Adolf Hitler's vile and homicidal mascot—as we tackle this World War II adventure. And while we may be shaking our fists at the omission of history's most putrid villains, we may yet come to accept developer Next Level Games' decision.

At once, it's clear the game captures Cap's superhuman grace. Cap can leap about, rolling and ducking to avoid blows and hopping over enemies so as to better clobber them in the back of their heads. We can also use Cap's magnificent circular and indestructible shield to defend against bullets or huck it in order to incapacitate foes. During platforming stages, we can recreate Cap's great feats of derring-do with extended swings, hops, dives, and leaps.

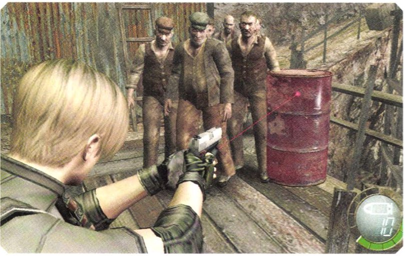
We're looking forward to Cap's patriotism wrapped in this brand-new story. Even if the best bad guys are sitting on the bench.

GREG ORLANDO

Captain America got his super agility and muscles via a super-soldier serum.

Fun Fact: *Captain America* star Chris Evans played the Human Torch in two *Fantastic Four* films.

When Captain America throws his mighty shield, all those who chose to oppose his shield must yield!



FIRST LOOK Format **PSN** ETA **Fall** Pub **Capcom** Dev **Capcom**

Resident Evil 4

Evil gets a high-definition makeover

Capcom changed survival horror with the now-classic *Resident Evil 4* and now it's planning to improve on the game's greatness with high-definition graphics.

The *RE4* remake will appear on the PlayStation Network as a downloadable title. This will mark the first time the game appears on PS3; it had originally seen release on Nintendo's GameCube and, later, the PlayStation 2.

Resident Evil got a jolt with 4. The game adopted a more fluid movement system for its hero Leon Kennedy, and introduced a new behind-the-shoulder camera. Capcom also emphasized action over strict horror, with Kennedy fighting fast-moving zombies and more giant-sized beasts than was the norm in previous games.

As the zombie-suplexing Kennedy, we must rescue the president's annoying daughter, Ashley. Ashley's been kidnapped by a cult using a parasite to turn people into mindless zombies, and Kennedy gets embroiled in a plot to take over the United States. Along the way, Kennedy runs afoul of enemies from his past, and both he and his young charge become infected with parasites. This, then, is a recipe for zombie excellence. **GREG ORLANDO**

Also very evil

Resident Evil Code: Veronica X

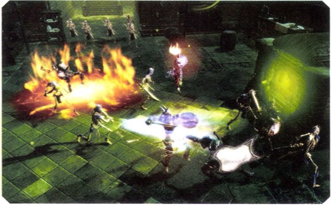
(Capcom)

Capcom also plans to release a high-definition version of the super-creepy *Resident Evil Code: Veronica X* on PSN. *Veronica* is a more traditional *Resident Evil* game starring agents Chris and Claire Redfield investigating a strange zombie-choked island. This will mark the game's first appearance on PS3 and it's also slated for a fall release.

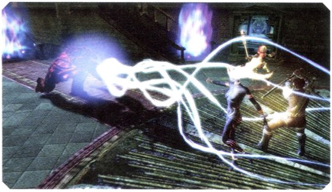
Silent Hill: Downpour

(Konami)

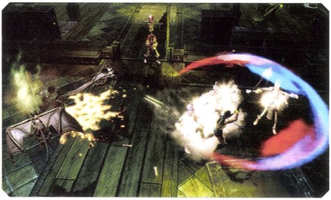
There's no escape from *Silent Hill's* creepiness. We play as escaped prisoner Murphy Pendleton as he explores the waterlogged southeastern portion of the damned town. Konami promises that Pendleton's actions will open up side-quests, and we'd say we're sopping with anticipation, if it wasn't so gross. The *Downpour* will begin this fall.



We're intrigued by *Dungeon Siege's* four-player multiplayer options. It's always better to lay siege to dungeons with friends.



The game offers four playable characters, each with a particular bent. Here, we see the archon and the guardian teaming up for great justice.

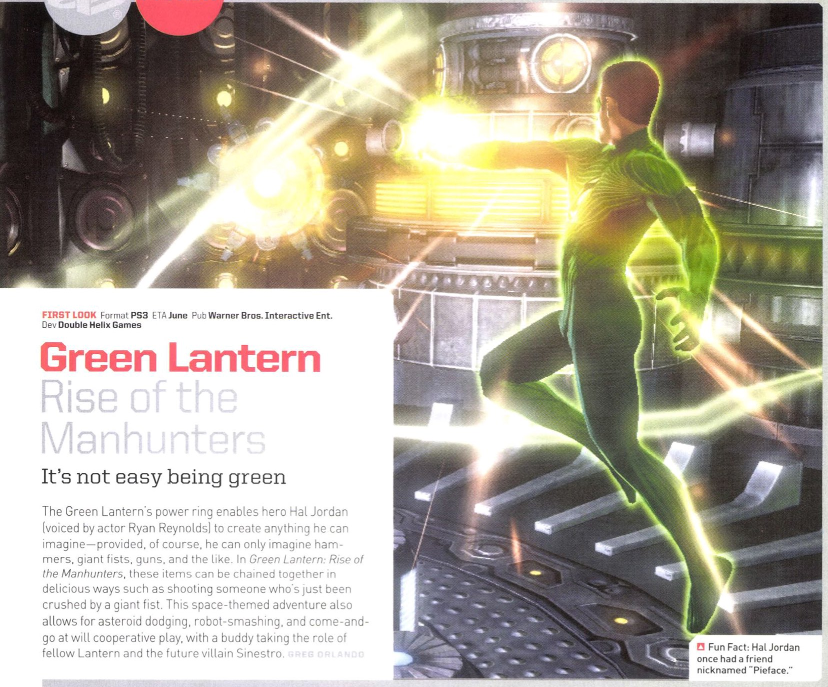


HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **June** Pub **Square Enix**
Dev **Obsidian Entertainment**

Dungeon Siege III

Ehb and flow and stabbing

The Kingdom of Ehb, perpetually a hotspot for *tsuris* and *mishegoss*, plays host to the events of the action-heavy RPG *Dungeon Siege III*. This is the first time *Siege* has come to consoles, and we can play as one of four heroes (warrior, mage, gunslinger, human-elemental hybrid). Our playtest as Katarina proved suitably fun as we blasted the hell out of mercenaries with a variety of carbines, pistols, and shotguns. Along the way, we collected piles of loot, including all kinds of new weapons that allowed us to change our stance in order to handle different kinds of foes. **GREG ORLANDO**



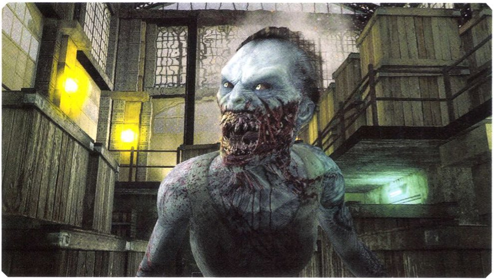
FIRST LOOK Format **PS3** ETA **June** Pub **Warner Bros. Interactive Ent.**
Dev **Double Helix Games**

Green Lantern Rise of the Manhunters

It's not easy being green

The Green Lantern's power ring enables hero Hal Jordan (voiced by actor Ryan Reynolds) to create anything he can imagine—provided, of course, he can only imagine hammers, giant fists, guns, and the like. In *Green Lantern: Rise of the Manhunters*, these items can be chained together in delicious ways such as shooting someone who's just been crushed by a giant fist. This space-themed adventure also allows for asteroid dodging, robot-smashing, and come-and-go at will cooperative play, with a buddy taking the role of fellow Lantern and the future villain Sinestro. GREG ORLANDO

Fun Fact: Hal Jordan once had a friend nicknamed "Pieface."



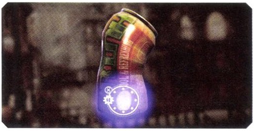
FIRST LOOK Format **PSN** ETA **June** Pub **Lexis Numerique**
Dev **Lexis Numerique**

A.M.Y

Alma, eat your heart out

Not many illnesses can be cured by simply standing close to a little girl with mysterious powers, but it turns out "slowly turning into a zombie" is one of them. After a meteor derails her train, ill-fated scientist Lana awakes to discover her travel buddies morphing into hideous monsters just as quickly as the army is cutting them down. Naturally, she takes off running...only to discover that she too is injured and infected.

Red Johnson's riddles are as clever and intricate as its plot is layered and treacherous.



FIRST LOOK Format **PSN** ETA **May** Pub **Lexis Numerique** Dev **Lexis Numerique**

Red Johnson Chronicles

The good detective

Classic point-and-click adventure games such as the unassailable *Monkey Island* have become something of a lost art, but never fear: Red Johnson, private investigator is on the case. His upcoming PSN title *Red Johnson Chronicles* puts a gritty noir spin on the fading genre, turning its simple puzzle-based mechanics into the tools of a twisted murder mystery.

As with many games in the aptly named genre, the titular gumshoe Red doesn't appear on screen for the majority of the gameplay. Instead, players simply guide a cursor across beautifully drawn backgrounds searching for anything to interact with: a suspicious person, a partially open window, a spent shell casing—basically any object that could be hiding *the truth*.

Each point of interaction will cue one of a number of different events, including conversations, cutscenes, quick-time events, and puzzles. In order to break into a suspect's apartment, for example, we clicked on his window, solved a block-sliding minigame to break the lock, survived a quick-time assault when he discovered our incursion, and hastily selected dialogue options to talk him out of shooting us.

As we collect more evidence, the game's world opens up, with multiple locations and objectives becoming available all at once. Should we ever get stuck, we can always buy hints or return to our office to dig through old files and analyze any items we've collected. Eventually we'll have a solid enough case to answer a judge's questions so justice can be served and the guilty punished for their heinous crimes. SCOTT BUTTERWORTH

Want More?

For a more modern take on adventure games (with its own noir detective storyline), keep an eye out for Rockstar's *L.A. Noire*, a full-fledged crime drama that challenges players to read facial cues as part of their investigations.

Somehow she stumbles onto Amy, a creepy little girl whose mere presence helps heal Lana any time she starts going all brain-eater. It's almost a shame too; as Lana gets sicker, her skin begins to crack and turn gray, her vision becomes red and warped, and she starts to hear voices. It's pretty damn cool.

In order to overcome her infection, Lana must traverse a variety of environments—from churches and offices to more open outdoor spaces—with the goal being to eventually reach a hospital. Along they way, she'll solve puzzles (with Amy's help, of course), sneak past threats, and even fight the occasional monster using objects in the environment. According to the developers at Lexis Numerique, *A.M.Y* is more about tension than action, but either way, this ambitious downloadable survival-horror game should be a scream. SCOTT BUTTERWORTH

One-Trick Pony

Dynasty Warriors: Gundam 3

(Namco Bandai)

"We're not sure which is the singular trick: the mechas or pushing the X button 10,000 times."

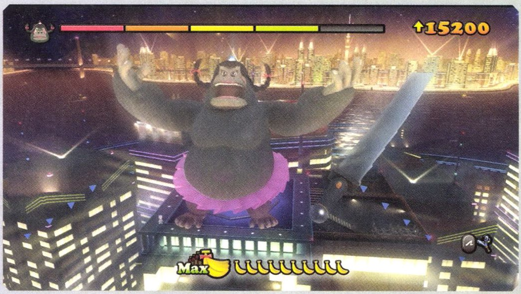
The latest on...

New shots, new games, new info

PlayStation Move Ape Escape

Format **PSN** ETA **June** Pub **SCEA** Dev **SCE Studios Japan**

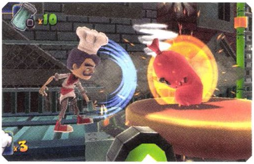
It's time to quit monkeying around and go bananas for *PlayStation Move Ape Escape*. *Ape Escape* is finally coming to PS3 as a PSN game, and it will arrive in spectacular rail-shooter fashion with 15 new stages, gadgets such as the slingshot and fan, as well as Move compatibility. This spells the death of monkey business; wacky, alarm-hat-wearing simians are invading, and with over 500 types of monkeys to capture on the way to the evil leader, Specter, we'll have our work cut out for us...after we write a strongly worded letter to Sony informing it that monkeys are not apes, that is.



Call of Juarez: The Cartel

Format **PS3** ETA **Fall** Pub **Ubisoft** Dev **Techland**

We're not sure why *Call of Juarez* is abandoning the Old West in favor of a modern Los Angeles-meets-*Gunsmoke* setting, but Ray McCall is no more. His descendant, Ben McCall, who looks and acts just like him, has replaced the familiar antihero.



BurgerTime HD

Format **PSN** ETA **TBD** Pub **MonkeyPaw** Dev **MonkeyPaw**

If there are two things we love with all our moldy, gray hearts, it's videogames and hamburgers. *BurgerTime*, an '80s arcade classic, brought both beloved elements together and is receiving the HD treatment with new graphics as well as fresh circular platforming level designs.

HIGH VOLTAGE
KEEP OUT

Armageddon Riders

Format **PSN** ETA **May** Pub **Targem** Dev **Targem**

Everyone else is zombies, and that sucks. But we're in an armored car, which is great. This story-based racer allows for vehicular combat, exploration, artifact collection, and five separate mission types. Just remember to wear a helmet when saving the world from pedestrians.

Cars 2: The Video Game

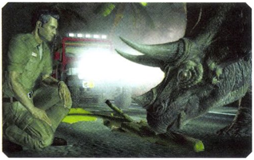
Format **PS3** ETA **Fall** Pub **Disney Int. Studios** Dev **Avalanche**

They've given us numbers and taken away our names, but we're okay with this. Based on the forthcoming Pixar animated film, *Cars 2: The Video Game* offers a solo adventure and several different combat-based multiplayer modes to transform us into spy mobiles.

Skullgirls

Format **PSN** ETA **Summer** Pub **Autumn Games** Dev **Reverge Labs**

Can happiness be found in chick fights and in 2D arcade brawlers that remind us of the good ol' days? *Skullgirls* says it can and we're inclined to believe it. The downloadable, eight-character punch-up combines both and does it all in detailed high definition.



Jurassic Park

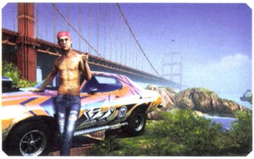
Format **PSN** ETA **Fall** Pub **Telltale Games** Dev **Telltale**

We always wondered what happened to those missing dinosaur embryos—they're now grown and trying to eat us. This five-part, point-and-click adventure is based on the Michael Crichton novel and its subsequent giant-dinosaur laden films. Has science learned nothing of hubris?

Storm

Format **PSN** ETA **TBD** Pub **Zoo Games** Dev **EKO**

We love physics games, primarily because they make us feel smart—when they're not making us feel otherwise. In *Storm* we use wind, lightning, and rain to guide seeds around obstacles so they can grow into trees. We're switching careers from game journalists to weather gods.



Fireburst

Format **PSN** ETA **Summer** Pub **Zoo Games** Dev **Zoo Games**

Pay no mind, that burning sensation requires no medication. Instead it is a result of furious firebursting, in which we can race as one of 16 characters driving muscle cars, buggies, trucks, and off-road vehicles on both paved tracks and dirt lanes.

Warlords

Format **PSN** ETA **Summer** Pub **Atari** Dev **Griptonite Games**

Here's a real blast from the past: *Warlords* first saw release on the Atari 2600 in 1981. Now, the castle-smashing game has been remade to include controllable minions who must seize key points on the battlefield, and it offers four-player online action.

Gut Reaction

The right and the blight

▲Day One DL
NGP will allow us to download new games on the day of their release. Now that's a smart move.

▲Kool Kombat
Mortal Kombat? Now we're getting back to the series' roots. Yes, we have our new online obsession.

▲HD Remakes
We're excited to see old friends reappear with kickass graphics.

▼HD Remakes
Don't dare half-ass them, developers. We'll know! Oh, yes, we will.

▼Agency, Closed
There go our hopes and dreams. *The Agency: Covert Ops* MMO has been canceled.

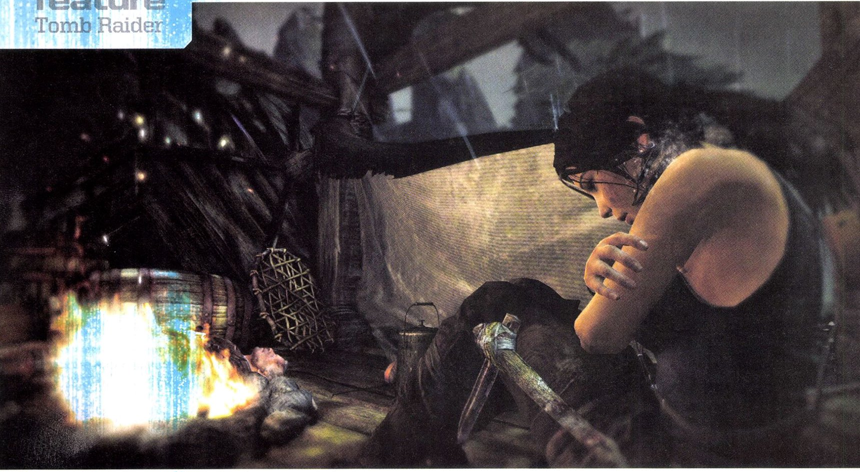
▼EA Bans
So, wait. Can someone explain to us why someone who acts up on a message board can have his access to Electronic Arts' online games revoked? Is this a really, really bad joke, EA?

WORLD EXCLUSIVE SCREENS
PlayStation
The Official Magazine

emotion engine

A younger Lara Croft comes of age and faces her own mortality in Crystal Dynamics' Tomb Raider reboot

By Evan Shamoon



The first thing we notice about this new, younger Lara Croft is how vulnerable she is. And that's not just because she's hanging upside down in a dank cave, wrapped up like an insect in a makeshift cocoon of unknown origin. We also notice—as Lara swings back and forth, attempting to set her bonds on fire in a desperate attempt at escape—that she's tentative. Gone are the witty quips, the superhuman attitude, the impossible physical proportions, here replaced with something profoundly more human.

"I can't die like this," she mutters—and she says it like she means it. Lara is aware of her mortality. She's not infallible.

We use her momentum to rock the cocoon back and forth until it does indeed catch fire from a nearby torch; the fabric immediately incinerates, sending her falling some 30 feet to the floor of the cave—and directly onto a piece of scrap metal. The camera pulls in tight and we see the rusty spike puncture her skin, and blood seep out onto her shirt. In order to remove the spike, we're asked to rapidly tap the X button; it eventually comes out, to the sound of her agonizing screams. But the wound remains: Lara will be holding her side in pain throughout the 40-odd minutes of our demo.

Back on her feet, Lara begins to make her way forward. Staggering through the muck, we can almost smell the mold and decay around her, with imagery that's menacing in a way the series has never seen. When she stumbles upon what appears to be some sort of shrine, shrill stabs reverberate on the soundtrack; the candles and other trappings surround the remains of a human corpse. "God, no. What have they done to you?" Lara asks herself. She hoists herself into a small crawlspace on the far wall, and is suddenly grabbed by a man with the look of a crazed meth addict. He seems to be attempting to tell us something, but he's too aggressive to be trusted; in a panic, Lara frantically kicks herself free (the alternative, which we witness in another playthrough, has Lara brutally killed by the man).

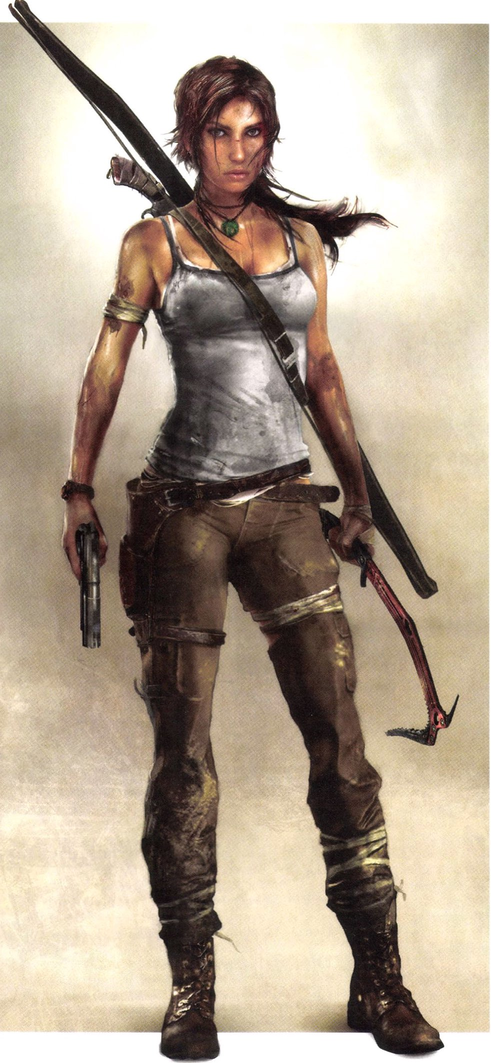
Squeezing herself through the small tunnel, the camera pulls in tight. Lara's cramped confines are our claustrophobia, and as she inches her way forward, we get an up-close and personal view of the dirt, sweat, and blood on her face. The controls are minimized (Lara can only go forward and backward), and the dynamic camera keeps her tightly framed, with Lara's head touching the ceiling and her body and arms rubbing up against the wall as she goes by.

Gone are Lara Croft's witty quips, her superhuman attitude, her impossible physical proportions.

Coming Up for Air

Eventually Lara funnels out the other side, into a pool of water and the game's first puzzle. A far cry from the boulder-pushing exercises of past *Tomb Raider* titles, we are presented with a sandbox in which to experiment: water, fire, buoyancy, and their associated physics. To help us through, we engage Instinct mode—essentially, a mode in which the interactive elements on screen are highlighted (the developers say this will help players through early portions of the game, but that over time they'll learn to properly "see" their surroundings without it). Without spoiling too much, the sequence plays like something out of *Half-Life 2* or *Portal*: a clear path between the fire and some explosive (red!) barrels floating in the water must be forged, and manipulating and experimenting with the elements of the world becomes key.

The sequence ends in a room-rattling explosion that opens up an escape route for our heroine. When it does, Lara scampers up the side of the wall, with alternative squeezes of the left and right shoulder buttons propelling her up the wall to safety. The final escape, wrought with panic and fright, ends with our first glimpse of the outside world: it's a massive ship graveyard. Cue the beginning of the story of how Lara Croft came to be.



Crafting Lara Croft

The more she changes, the more she remains the same. Senior art director Brian Horton shares the thinking behind Lara Croft's bold new reimagining.

Her voice

"We all agreed on the goals to find a voice that captured a younger and more relatable Lara. We wanted to find an actress who we could believe in and also express a wide range of emotions."

Her face

"This was our most important challenge. We wanted the fans to recognize Lara in our design, but we knew we had to change her. She had to be younger and more believable; moving away from stylization allows us to make her more relevant."

Her hair

"Lara's hair is mostly recognizable; we retained the basic shape and style but made it more disheveled to fit with the survival tone of the story."

Her physique

"Just like her face, Lara's body needed to feel more believable. We wanted to make her more realistic in proportionality, a body that is attractive without idealization."

Her outfit

"Lara's clothes are deliberately common; she wears layered tank tops, cargos, and boots. She wears these clothes because they are practical for her adventure. Lara's clothes will also show the wear and tear throughout the adventure and she'll accumulate weapons and gear along the way. This evolution will showcase the physical growth that parallels her personal growth throughout the game."

Her fragility

"The tone of the game will put Lara in life and death situations. Our goal was to create a damage system that will reflect temporary and permanent wounds. The damage Lara suffers throughout the game will be reflected on her body and clothes, a reminder of her survival story."

The team at Crystal Dynamics started with a problem, but one it was confident it could solve: Lara Croft was not believable. "She was almost like a superhero, and it was very expected that she was going to become a badass and take care of business," says Darrell Gallagher, head of studio at Crystal Dynamics.

"One of the goals we had going in was to create a more relatable, more mortal character," he continues. "It was not only a reflection of how sophisticated storytelling has become in games; it was also because Lara had kind of become unrelatable. For us, it was about finding that human angle in Lara that no one had seen before."

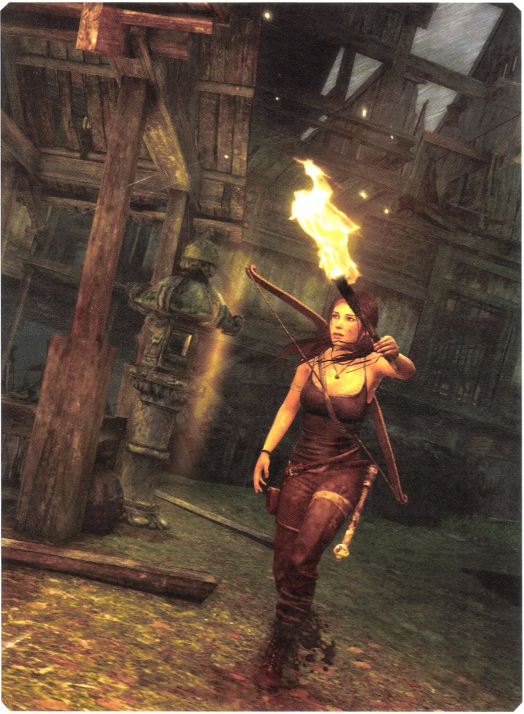
This meant going back in time, of course, before she became the Lara Croft we've come to know: the perpetually cool, confident force of nature who's one of gaming's most recognizable figures. In the reboot, we follow the journey of Lara as a recent college graduate, wholly inexperienced in the art of tomb raiding and completely new to the threat of people trying to kill her.

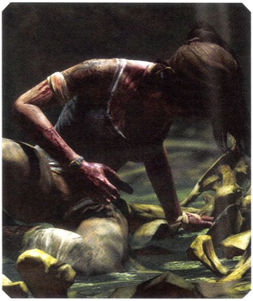
Karl Stewart, Crystal Dynamics' global brand director, uses the example of *Batman Begins* to help illustrate the team's approach. "The first third of that movie is about breaking that character down and showing his vulnerabilities," Stewart says of Christopher Nolan's 2005 film. "Putting him in a position that you've never seen that character in before. Ultimately, you feel that character become more relevant to you. You have an emotional attachment that you wouldn't have had in the past. For us, it was about taking Lara Croft and making her not just culturally relevant, but just relevant...*emotionally* relevant." To break past a long-held universal perception in the gaming community, the team had to question everything that had gone into making Lara who she is today.

▲ Lara's mentor Conrad Roth is perfectly mortal, too. Crystal Dynamics wants no superheroes here.

Death and the Maiden

Words like "emotion" and "vulnerability" are repeatedly thrown around throughout the course of our day at Crystal Dynamics. At one point, after our failed attempt to escape the assailant inside the cave that results in Lara's death, Stewart makes a curious statement: "We're not afraid to let Lara die." The brutal animation that accompanies Lara's death, which we can assume is one of plenty that will eventually litter the game, is not done simply for the sake of gratuitous gore, but instead to further highlight the new "realness" of Lara Croft. This, we're told again and again, is not the "Teflon Lara" of old, but one cursed with the same fragile, breakable body as the rest of us (okay, not quite, but you get the point). "She's younger, she's vulnerable, and it





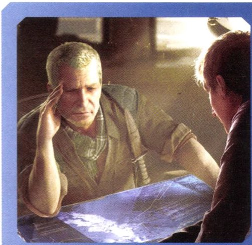
Lara's brand of archaeology is dirty, sweaty, and decidedly bloody. She's very much mortal, and her body will show all the effects of her adventuring.

"She's younger, she's vulnerable, and it generally feels like she's not in control." –Darrell Gallagher

generally feels like she's not in control," Gallagher says. "Whereas that was not the case in previous versions."

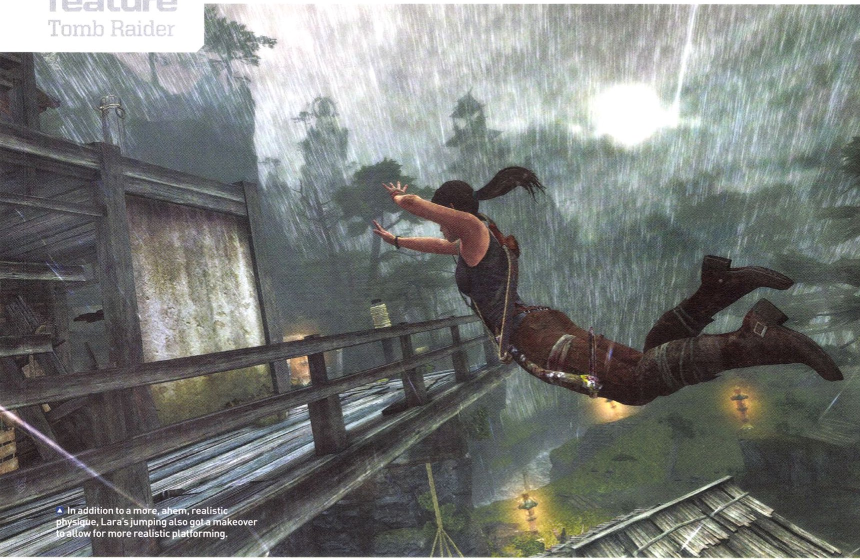
Survival has become the main focus of the team, and everything in the game is being filtered through that lens. The story takes place shortly after Lara has graduated from university in England. Seeking adventure and life experience, she finds her way onto the ship *Endurance* in search of lost treasures off the coast of Japan. The expedition, however, is abruptly cut short by a storm that rips the craft in two, plunging Lara and the ship's captain, Conrad Roth, into the Pacific. The entire game takes place on a single island onto which Lara and Roth wash ashore; our demo is set below ground and above it, following Lara through two intense escape sequences.

This survival focus is something Gallagher hopes will separate the game from the glut of titles that feature unshakable, muscle-bound heroes, super or otherwise. "This is a real, visceral survival story," he says. "You see the result of what happens if you don't survive. The brutal and shocking deaths help to reinforce the frailty and the human side of this character."



The Mentor: Conrad Roth

After serving two combat tours with the RMC (Royal Marine Commandos), Conrad Roth left the military and put his skills to use as a wreck diver and freelance treasure hunter. He traveled the world, earning a rep for toughness and a willingness to bend inconvenient laws restricting traffic in historical artifacts. He will do what it takes in order to get his prize.

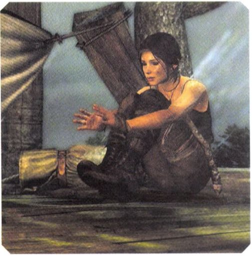


▲ In addition to a more, ahem, realistic physique, Lara's jumping also got a makeover to allow for more realistic platforming.

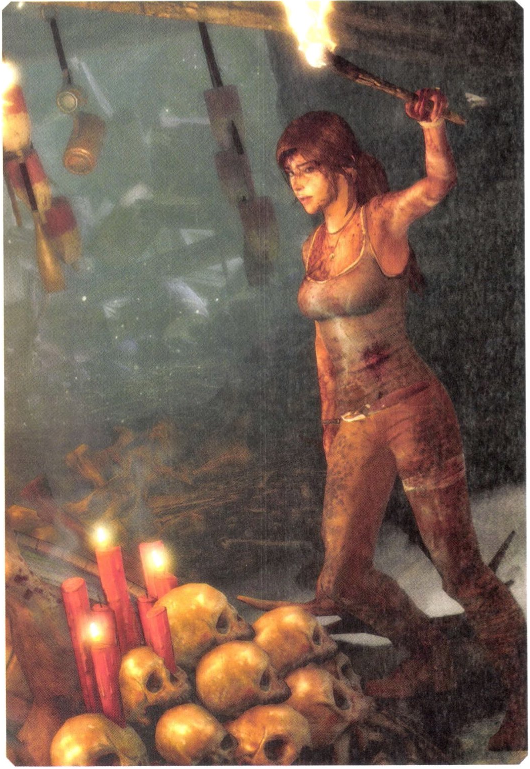
"Lara's a victim of her own success. She became more icon than human. In this game, we're allowing her to be afraid, to get hurt." –Noah Hughes

The second part of our demo capably demonstrates Lara's physical abilities, and the ways in which they've been updated for a modern audience. Her traversal skills become immediately evident: Once aboveground, Lara begins climbing through what appears to be an abandoned village. It's a rather ideal place to show off her newfound acrobatic abilities, both more limited and more abundant than they've ever been before. Allow us to explain.

Whereas previous *Tomb Raider* titles relied on "binary" jumps—turn, aim, hope for the best—this time around they're far more dynamic. "Before, it was, you jump and the engine says whether you made it or not," Gallagher says. "Engine says yes, or engine says no. In this game you can jump and sort of aim in the right direction, and end up getting there—or change it on the fly a little, and she'll twist and turn in midair, and actually grab stuff off to the side. It's a lot more forgiving in terms of control, and a lot more forgiving in



▲ Combat in this reboot won't glorify killing. This younger, more fragile Lara, however, realizes that sometimes it's either kill or be killed.



terms of how it feels on the sticks." It's more *Assassin's Creed* than traditional *Tomb Raider*; while Lara is certainly capable of more than most humans, the best parkour performers and acrobats in the world may actually be able to do much of what she does. What's clear is that it's all grounded in more realistic, more convincing systems. "Physics is a star in our game," Gallagher says.

Finding the right balance between physical freedom and the limitations of the human body and gravity, of course, remains key. "It's a challenge," Gallagher says. "You don't want to feel unempowered as a player. We struggle to find the right balance of communicating the rawness, the emotional side through the cutscenes and the intimate cameras. Yet still, while in gameplay, feeling like you have control—you still have the ability to make your way through the world as a player."

While we're not shown any combat today, we are given some hints as to what it may look like. The team has broken away from conventions of the past, trading the lock-on targeting for a more modern, dynamic free-aim system. "I think the main thing to say is that it's been given a drastic overhaul and re-envisioning of what combat is in *Tomb Raider*," Stewart says. "It's put through similar filters to what you see here, so it's a very survival-based combat system. It really reflects the character and the survival theme." Whether the game will use waves and waves of enemies still remains to be seen, but Stewart says this is decidedly *not Uncharted*. "Let me put it this way: For us, killing is not a sport." When Lara is savagely attacked by wolf and forced to kill it with a metal stake, her tone is regretful rather than triumphant. "Sorry," she says, wearily. "It was me or you."

New Heights

While the game isn't what one would describe as a free-roaming adventure, the team is very quick to point out that anything we see on the island actually exists in the game world; in short, if we see it, we can access it. "It's not an open world," Stewart says. "But we try to give a sense of freedom, so the player feels like they can go and re-explore. But you cannot tell the story we're trying to tell by saying, basically: Here's an open island." There will be an element of choice to the experience, as players will be given multiple ways to approach an obstacle, but don't expect anything like the "play your own way" approach of Square Enix-published sibling (and fellow franchise reboot) *Deus Ex: Human Revolution*.

At the very end of our demo, Lara acquires a climbing axe and is tasked with a mission that requires its use to get to a building atop one of the island's mountains. "It opens up tons of gameplay, but as you can tell by the look on her face, it's daunting because it also opens up so many more obstacles," says creative director Noah Hughes.

"Lara's a victim of her own success," Hughes continues. "She became more icon than human. In this game, we're allowing her to be afraid, to get hurt. We are re-envisioning her as someone you could conceivably know or hang out with."

It's a bold new direction for the franchise, which has taken a sharp right turn from its legacy.

▲ Lara's movements will seem very natural in the game. The developers are planning numerous layers of animations to help convey emotion.

What we're shown today aptly fits the description of a "franchise reboot." Maybe it's the island, maybe it's the fact that Lara looks more than a bit like Kate, but J.J. Abrams' TV series *Lost* keeps coming to mind throughout the day. Whatever the case, it's a bold new direction for the *Tomb Raider* franchise, which has taken a sharp right turn from its legacy, while still maintaining what has given the game series legs (excuse the pun) for 20 years.

"We planned it as a different direction quite some time ago," Gallagher says of the new game's conception process. "Because we knew the previous three games we did were a self-contained trilogy, and we always planned that at the end of it there would be something more to come. We didn't know what it was at the time, but when that [trilogy] wrapped, it was kind of like, 'Okay what's next?' After looking at the gaming landscape, we sat down and figured out what we had to do to take the character forward."

Visually, the game looks more *Uncharted* than it does *Tomb Raider: Underworld*, with a spectacularly detailed protagonist that feels as lifelike as any character we've seen on PS3. On top of the added physical realism and modernized mechanics, this newest incarnation of *Tomb Raider* brings a more cinematic vision to Lara's exploits. The team hired a professional cinematographer to help it bring its vision to life, using the frame to communicate emotion and relationships between characters. The team tells us it's treating the camera almost like a secondary character. From camerawork to voice acting to physical motion capture, the team is shooting the game's cutscenes in a manner that attempts to reproduce the feel of live cinema.

Survive and Thrive

The game isn't due until next year, and while what we've seen looks very polished considering its relatively early stage of development, nothing is coming easy. Twelve-hour days are

▲ What's the secret of this ships' graveyard? Lara's life may depend on unravelling its mystery.

the norm for many of the team at Crystal Dynamics, and changing course for a franchise that's some 10 games (and two films) deep can be a bit like trying to do perform donuts with a cruise ship.

"Survival is a feeling, it's not a mechanic," Gallagher says. "I think that's one of the things that's unique about what we're trying to do—build mechanics that support an emotion and a feeling. That's much harder to do than saying, 'We're building 16-player deathmatches, or we're doing an open world.'" This desire to deliver a detailed emotional experience is well-illustrated in Lara's movements: On top of her core walk cycle, the team is applying some 20 layers of animation to convey emotion—Lara holding her puncture wound, Lara grimacing in pain, Lara dragging a wounded leg.

"You say survival, and is it [British adventurer] Bear Grylls picking berries and eating them? Or do you chop [Lara's] arm off?" Gallagher asks. "There are various flavors of what that means, and actually expressing that in one singular form and vision onscreen—with a team of people understanding it—is very difficult."

The Lara we meet today is concerned with neither berries nor the loss of her arm, but she is very much dealing with her own fears as she tries to feel her way through the darkness of both young adulthood and one rather unsettling island. And yes, we'd hang out with her. Planning on it, actually.

Digging for Inspiration

127 Hours

"[Aron Ralston] went through very similar things," says Gallagher. "It's more about that human emotion of what you'd have to go through in a dire situation, and call upon that inner strength to really shine through. It's not something that's really typical in games."

Batman Begins

As with the quintessential Dark Knight movie, the origin story is the focus in the new *Tomb Raider*. "We're really breaking [Lara] down, showing you where she came from," says Stewart. "It gives you a level of intimacy with the character that would be hard to achieve

James Bond

"Over the years, [the James Bond film franchise] has been successful because it took the character in a different direction and modernized him for contemporary audiences, rather than merely sticking with what was originally created in the '60s-era movies," says Gallagher.

Book of Eli

"[Eli] has a limited array of gear, but can use what he has in creative ways," says Gallagher. "We're applying that to Lara as well." As she progresses through the game, Lara gains items that help her grow, but these will be small in number and large in practice. Minimal items, maximum usage.

DID EZIO REALLY INVENT THE CAFFE LATTE?

AND 33 OTHER WAYS VIDEOGAMES CHANGED HISTORY

From 400 B.C. to 2011 A.D. and beyond, how would history look if it was written by videogames? It all starts with a bald, angry, Greek god...

400BC

Fighting is invented after an angry bald man and his dad fall out. It's a time of intense theological discussion through the medium of extreme violence. Many exotic species such as the Medusa, cyclops, and harpy mysteriously die out. According to God of War

1050

Another mysterious extinction event sees werewolves, vampires, and chupacabras wiped from the face of the Earth. Everyone's a bit sad to see the wolves and vampires go, but no one misses the chupacabras, with one prominent member of a religious order called the Brotherhood of Light referring to them as "thieving littl s#*!s". According to Castlevania: Lords of Shadow

169-280

The largest kingdoms in China begin to develop a rudimentary form of politics, combining the flamboyant costumes of cabaret, pointy things on sticks, and extremely bloody slaughter. It's slow to catch on with the rest of the world. According to Dynasty Warriors

1192

Hell is thoroughly charted by a young crusader trying to save his wife's soul from Satan. The underworld is revealed to look a bit like Utah, only with more lava and 700-foot phallic towers. It's split into several distinct levels named after their characteristics: tutorial, good part, the rude one, filler, filler, filler, and boss fight.
According to Dante's Inferno

44BC

Julius Caesar is murdered in ancient Rome. The conspiracy behind it is uncovered by Agrippa, a centurion-turned-gladiator, and Caesar's nephew, Octavianus. It's a demonstration of misguided early forensic techniques, as the crime is mainly solved by Agrippa's ability to sever limbs and Octavianus' skill at hiding in clay pots. According to Shadow of Rome

600

Existence faces its first real threat of annihilation when a young prince discovers time travel and makes more holes in history in his brief teenage reign than Captain Kirk managed in a career. Somehow countless paradoxes fail to destroy the universe. Although the future where we're fabulously wealthy and married to Scarlett Johansson is lost forever when the Prince treads on a butterfly. According to Prince of Persia

1191

Man's burgeoning grasp of architecture leads to the invention of free running. At the same time a cult group of assassins develop revolutionary laundry techniques enabling them to wear white in a world made of dirt and animal dung. Several important people die in mysterious circumstances with witnesses describing a suspect that looked "really clean." According to Assassin's Creed

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1488

Italy undergoes a period of rapid cultural and scientific advancements. Murder rates increase. Ezio Auditore da Firenze, upon first tasting Turkish coffee, suggests that it could use some sugar and milk, inventing the latte. According to Assassin's Creed II

1914

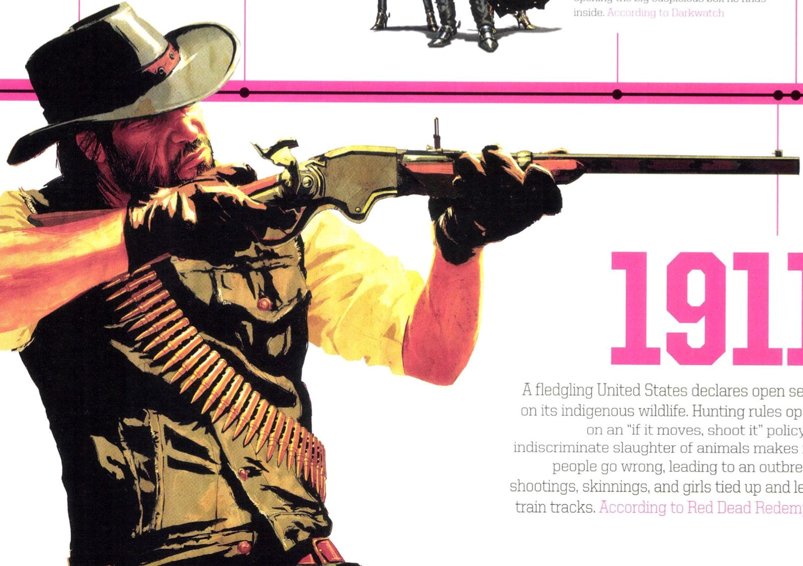
World War I happens, but due to its crappy guns, it fails to catch on. However, at least one young soldier gains supernatural powers from a demon, proving the occult can liven up just about any party. According to The Darkness

1560

Sandwiched between the Kemmu restoration and the Muromachi period is the lesser known portion of Japanese history known as "Jesus Marimba! There are demons everywhere!" [Rough translation.] The monster problem is allegedly solved by a pop star turned actor armed with a magic glove. According to Onimusha

1876

Vampires, until now considered to be extinct, are discovered to be alive (sort of) in the Old West. Their propagation is believed to be caused by the release of an undead lord called Lazarus Malkoth. His escape is due to a robber totally failing to take the hint from a train carriage full of monsters and half-eaten horses, and still opening the big suspicious box he finds inside. According to Darkwatch



1911

A fledgling United States declares open season on its indigenous wildlife. Hunting rules operate on an "if it moves, shoot it" policy. The indiscriminate slaughter of animals makes most people go wrong, leading to an outbreak of shootings, skinnings, and girls tied up and left on train tracks. According to Red Dead Redemption

1960

Mankind makes significant technological advances in both gene manipulation and waterproofing in the undersea city of Rapture. Unfortunately, alcohol and being able to shoot lightning from our fingers don't mix well and the city destroys itself after a fight breaks out at a New Year's Eve party. The altercation allegedly starts after a little girl shouts, "Leave him, Mr. B., he's not worth it." According to BioShock

1996

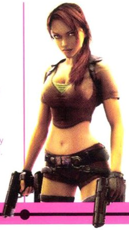
Several exotic varieties of big cat, bats, and lizards suddenly join the endangered species list. At the same time, numerous sites of historical importance are vandalized and valuable artifacts stolen. The travel plans, the purchase of an almost infinite amount of pistol ammunition, and a journal link the crimes to an English aristocrat named Lara Croft. According to Tomb Raider

1951

Without telling anyone involved in World War II, another global conflict erupts. Critics agree this was the far more interesting of the two due to its use of pew-pew laser guns, aliens with faces like a drawer full of knives, and almost no references to *Saving Private Ryan*. According to Resistance: Fall of Man

1972

Despite a massive TV campaign and excessive use of the Rolling Stones' back catalog, the Vietnam war fails to prove as popular as the American government hoped. Generals at the time blame the difficulty in rendering good trees. Even a widely ignored zombie outbreak fails to generate interest. According to Vietcong: Purple Haze, Conflict: Vietnam, and Shellshock 2: Blood Trails



1998

After years of experimentation, zombies are finally invented in a remote laboratory hidden under a forest mansion. After the undead have eaten all the people involved and most of a neighboring city, the scientific community decide more research is needed. Although everyone agrees the dogs were cool. According to Resident Evil

1939

World War II starts. Despite the global mobilization of troops and a death toll of millions, it is later discovered that most key battles were won by individual soldiers fighting alone. Statistics also prove that 84 percent of the war took place on Normandy beach. According to Call of Duty and Medal of Honor

1984

The inaugural King of the Iron First Tournament takes place. For the first time, punching people in the face has corporate sponsorship and worldwide television rights. Many fight fans question its legitimacy after watching a panda get beaten to a pulp by a 900-pound military robot. According to Tekken

1964

A nuclear apocalypse is thwarted. No one's tried it before so the terrorist group's amateurish member selection includes "really old guy" and "man who controls bees." According to Metal Gear Solid 3

2004

There are reports of a government computer that initiates nuclear armageddon and unleashes an army of killer cyborgs. However, there are also indications time travel is involved, causing most historians to throw their hands in the air. Meanwhile, in Spain, a disgraced Raccoon City policeman murders his way through several backwater villages looking for the President of the United States' jailbait daughter. According to Resident Evil 4, Terminator Salvation, and Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines

2014

Metal Gear villain Liquid Ocelot tries to take over the world by hijacking a nanomachine network implanted in every soldier on the planet. He nearly gets away with it because by now, no one knows what's going on in *MGS*. Snake eventually defeats him and disables a collective of A.I. cores, freeing the world from their control. According to Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots

2005

Terrorists overrun an Antarctic base using melodramatic monologue and an army of clones, before holding the world hostage with a big nuke-launching robot. Flying in the face of all conventional military tactics, a single retired soldier is sent in to solve the problem–one snapped neck at a time. Against all odds he saves the world, but isn't very happy about it. One person at the scene reports: "He does look a lot like his dad." According to Metal Gear Solid

2009

A surprisingly busy year sees a previously unheard of blonde ladyboy defeat an oil rig full of terrorists, a rapper get involved in Afghanistan, and dinosaurs overrun a scientific facility. The combination of existential megalomaniac A.I.s, implausible musical attacks on Middle Eastern insurgents, and big lizards, mean that most historians agree to never talk about 2009 again. According to Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty, 50 Cent: Blood on the Sand, Dino Crisis

2010

The Las Vegas tourist industry suffers a double blow when it's overrun by both terrorists *and* zombies. Fortunately, the two groups agree to keep out of each other's way to minimize the inconvenience. According to Rainbow Six: Vegas and Dead Rising 2

2052

Racing rocket-powered ships becomes the sports entertainment of choice. In an entirely unconnected incident, a mysterious disease called the Grey Death ravages the world. A nanotechnologically enhanced agent is sent to investigate terrorists. He eventually uncovers a global conspiracy full of feuding secret factions and plugs himself into an A.I. super-brain, taking over the world. According to WipEout and Deus Ex

2016

A nuclear attack on Saudi Arabia causes a global energy crisis. In the ensuing financial meltdown, three main powers emerge. Predictably, diplomacy immediately descends into the equivalent of a windmilling parking-lot punch up and World War III is go. According to Tom Clancy's EndWar

2007

With the threat of nuclear annihilation now an almost daily occurrence, hardly anybody notices when a combined unit of U.S. and British special forces save the world. Channeling the power of English regional accents and moustaches they defeat the Russian ultranationalists, but incur heavy casualties. Teenage boys the world over simultaneously wish Captain Price was their dad while looking up "ultranationalist" on Wikipedia. According to Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare

2020

After a while people get bored of global conflict and turn their energy to kick-ass architecture and pioneering street-cleaning technology. The result is a spotless, minimalist utopia where acrobatic runners courier sensitive information across the rooftops. Security forces don't like that at all and instigate parkour training for the police. Inexplicably, this is done in secret and requires several prominent figures to be killed. According to Mirror's Edge

2160

The world has been destroyed and overrun by psychotic robots. A young girl captures a man and, under threat of torture and death, forces him to protect her and take her home. Everyone is fine with this, however, because she is, like, totally hot. According to Enslaved: Odyssey to the West

2277

The world is ruined and reduced to radioactive dust and rubble. Various small factions survive thanks to underground shelters called Vaults. One young survivor manages to create a sustainable source of clean water. Although considering the planet's full of mutant fire-spitting ants and glowing skeletons it's hard to see how that helps anyone. According to Fallout

2357

Earth has recovered from several apocalypses but is taking no chances, colonizing deep space for some back-up planets. However, the population of one world, called Helghast, decide that a home made of sand and acid clouds is a bad deal, and invade the much nicer place next door. Sales of gas masks and orange sunglasses sky rocket. According to Killzone

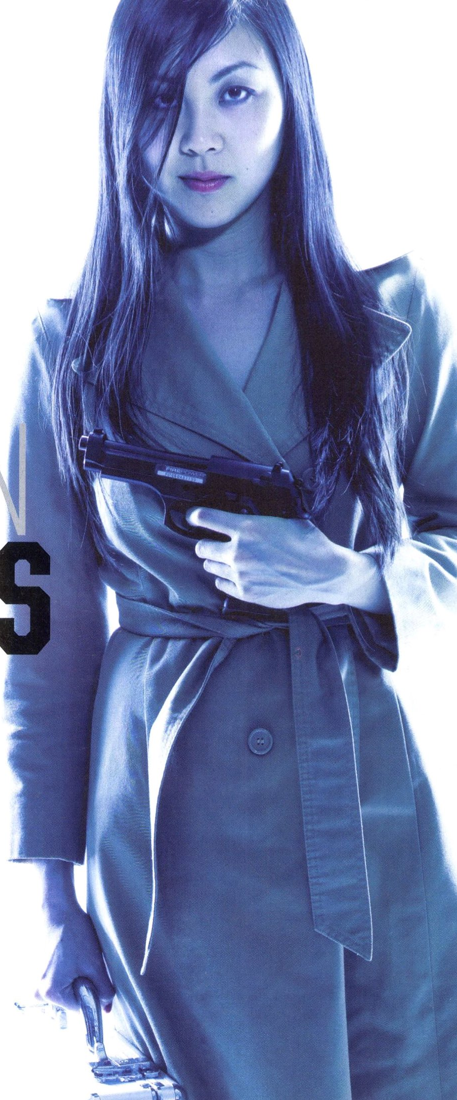
2414

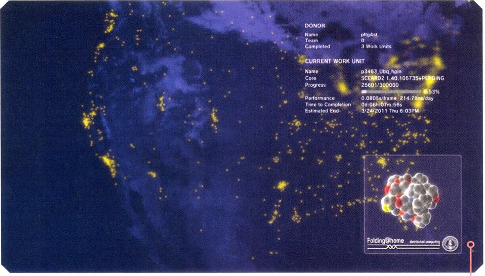
Mankind develops deep-space mining, cracking open entire planets to get at the good stuff inside. Unfortunately, one ship, the *Ishimura*, uncovers an insane breed of alien space zombie. Everything works out, though, because one manual laborer with a cutting tool defeats them all, succeeding where the *Ishimura's* 1,332-strong crew previously failed. According to Dead Space

TOP PSN SECRETS

By Ryan Taljonick Photography by Mark Madeo

Games? We've already got that in the bag. But what about backing up precious files? Or connecting with friends across the globe? Or even curing diseases? After all, Sony claims the PS3 "only does everything"—but how many of us actually bother to unleash the hidden value waiting to be exploited inside our PS3s? We sent our special agent deep undercover to reveal the 29 biggest secrets of the PlayStation Network.





DONOR

Name	pltg4st
Team	0
Completed	3 Work Units

CURRENT WORK UNIT

Name	p3463_Ubq_hpin
Core	SCEARD2 1.40.106735+PENDING
Progress	25601/300000 8.53%
Performance	0.0805s/frame 214.78ns/day
Time to Completion	0d:06h:07m:56s
Estimated End	3/24/2011 Thu 6:03PM

GET BUSY

After rooting around in the dark recesses of the network, our spy stumbled upon a treasure trove of software and utilities

1. Watch, Listen, Learn

Purchase or stream movies, music, and TV shows through apps like Netflix, Hulu Plus, and VUDU, or check out live sports games, player stats, and post-game highlights via the subscription-based NHL and MLB apps. Simply visit the Media section of the PlayStation Store to get started. A few inside tips: Get a 30-day free premium-service trial when signing up for Music Unlimited, or nab $5.99 in free VUDU credit for signing in with email.

2. Show Off

That sweet video of you topping the scoreboards in *PixelJunk Shooter 2*? You can show the world your formidable skills by uploading it to Facebook or YouTube straight from your PS3. Open the free Video Editor & Uploader tool from the Video menu and select the video file you'd like to edit. You can change the playback speed of the video, embed custom text, or add music samples included with the application. Who needs complicated video editing software when you've got a PS3?

3. Fight Cancer

Take a shot at curing real diseases. The Life with PlayStation application automatically connects your console to a network of PS3s participating in Stanford University's Folding@home project. The goal of the project, which requires massive amounts of data-crunching power, is to simulate the human body's protein-folding process. By distributing the project's intense workload over a vast network of computers, scientists can potentially discover cures for diseases. PTOM's Team ID is 57353. Join us!

4. Get Personal

PSN offers a ton of customization through an extensive library of themes and avatars. Head to the PlayStation Store and splurge on a dynamic theme or pick up a unique icon for your PSN ID. Why settle for a static background image when you can watch Nathan Drake stumble across your HDTV or gaze at an animated display of random puppies? (Who doesn't love puppies?) Whatever your interests, there are plenty of choices.

5. Browse Big

Navigating the Web on PS3 couldn't be simpler: Open the Internet Browser application from the Network menu to begin surfing your favorite sites. The homepage provides a sidebar of quick links to many favorite websites. Pressing the Triangle button will open the address bar. It's not the greatest browsing experience, but it's perfect for watching full-length movies on Crackle or streaming music from Pandora.

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SONY

6. Try 3D

If you own a 3D TV, PSN is a must. Open the PlayStation Store and check out all the 3D content available: From movies and videos like [sigh] Sports Illustrated Swimsuit clips to games like *Super Stardust HD* and *WipeOut HD*, there's enough material to turn those trendy shades into everyday eyewear.

LEVEL UP

Every good agent knows she sometimes has to pay a little to get a whole lot more in return. PlayStation Plus is just the kind of deal our spy is looking for.

7. Save Money

The most immediate benefit of a paid subscription to PlayStation Plus comes in the form of free monthly games. From PSN Minis to PSone classics, new titles are available to Plus members each month. Once a game is downloaded, it is yours to enjoy as long as you remain a subscriber of the service. Also, subscribers will receive additional discounts on several game titles each month as well as exclusive themes and avatars and early admittance to select game demos.

8. Automate

Plus subscribers can set their PS3 to awaken from standby and automatically download and install updates for their favorite games. Additionally, PS3 system updates can be automatically downloaded, though a manual install is still required. After your updates have been retrieved, the PS3 will revert back to standby mode. Now you can take care of all those pesky updates while you sleep and spend more of your precious waking hours doing what you love: playing games.

9. On Trial

Demos are a nice way to try before you buy, but sometimes they're just too short to convince you to commit your hard-earned cash toward a purchase. PlayStation Plus subscribers, however, can download and play hour-long trials from the full versions of select games. Purchase the game from the PlayStation Store after your trial session has ended and you can even continue right where you left off.

10. Store Game-Save Data Online

Ever wish your saved adventures didn't take up so much precious hard-drive space? Plus subscribers can use PSN cloud-based storage to save up to 150MB worth of game saves—a maximum of a thousand data files—per PSN account. Login to your account from *any* PS3 to access your saves.

Here's how it's done:

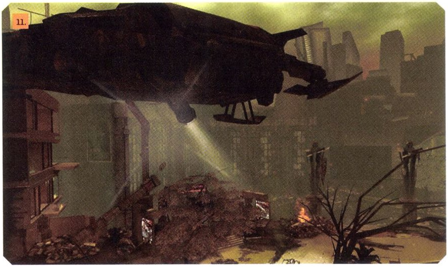
1. Navigate to the Game menu and select Saved Data Utility.
2. Highlight the game data you'd like to store online.
3. Press the Triangle button and select Copy.
4. Finally, select Online Storage.

GO HOME

Leave it to our intrepid agent to uncover 10 of the best hidden gems within PSN's exclusive social experience

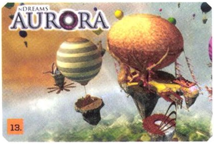
11. Central Plaza

Don't overlook Home's hub. Check in here for a wide array of games, community events, and interactive content that appears (and disappears) constantly, including a recent invasion led by Helghast troopers who blew the Plaza's serene surroundings to bits, raining bullets upon the ISA resistance from behind the remnants of war-torn buildings that once housed happy Home citizens.



12. Community Theater

Home's 10-screen theater houses everything from episodes of PSN originals like Qore, Pulse, and The Tester to developer interviews from the PlayStation Blog. But tucked away in Theater 10 is The Community Theater, which is updated every Thursday with exclusive videos produced by the PlayStation community.



13. Aurora

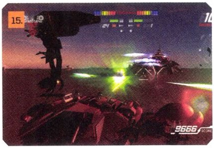
The latest offering from developer nDreams (Xi), Aurora is a mysterious archipelago of floating islands where players can take part in games such as OrbRunner, gaining XP and unlocking special rewards by defending the airborne isles from enemies. This unique game world is full of secrets and challenges, and evolves constantly with new features, characters, games, and narrative.

14. IREM Seaside of Memories

From the makers of *Moon Patrol* and *R-Type*, the IREM Seaside of Memories public space is always host to a beach party–no matter the day, no matter the weather. But the secrets of this ultra-popular space are in the sea: Dive into the crystal blue waters and search for collectable treasures that glimmer in the sand. Just be sure to watch out for the sharks...

15. SodiumOne

It's among the most popular Home destinations for a reason. With a massive 50-level tank combat game (the first five levels of the Salt Shooter are free-to-play, and the remaining 45 are unlocked with the one-time purchase of the Sodium pilot's jacket), the Sodium space itself is full of additional diversions, including Scorpion Stomper and Scorpio's drink-mixing minigame. After you visit the Sodium space, be sure to check your inventory for the Lockwood Gift Machine, which allows you to gift select virtual items to your friends.

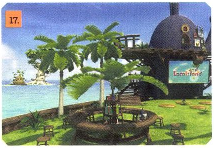


16. Dragon's Green

With nine holes of fantasy minigolf–and four difficulty gauntlets–Dragon's Green is among the richest and most robust gaming experiences available in Home. There are plenty of surprises on the Green that we wouldn't dare spoil for you, save for one: the first three levels are completely free.

17. LocoRoco

The ridiculously cute MuiMui Ship public space and Loco Island personal space are crammed with *LocoRoco* goodness...along with a few surprises. Line your wallets with pickories (the *LocoRoco* currency of choice) by dancing with MuiMuis, collecting the nuts that are scattered across Loco Island, and inviting your friends over to join in the festivities. Then take your pickories to the MuiMui King and cash them in for unlockable content. Hint: The Chuppa Vase will summon a Chuppa that will catapult you to the upper floors of your tree house, while the Domingo Penguin stool will let loose a Domingo Penguin that will swim around Loco Island and reward you with additional pickories.



18. LittleBigPlanet

Nurture your inner sharpshooter at the LittleBigDerby minigame and then partake in the King's Snap Happy Photo Challenge where the perfect shot will unlock special *LittleBigPlanet* rewards. That's not all–Home's *LittleBigPlanet* space includes a Wallpaper Creator game, where you can team up with other players and create custom XMB backdrops. For free.

19. SodiumTwo

The sequel to SodiumOne should be hitting PlayStation Home sometime this spring. Until then, here's our spy's stealth snapshot of a heavily customizable jet that she witnessed squaring off in multiplayer races at supersonic speeds. But the biggest secret? Unlike SodiumOne, every level of this futuristic racer is 100 percent free-to-play.

20. Novus Prime

A full space-combat game where you can form teams of up to four players and embark on a score of dangerous missions, using cutting-edge weaponry in intense battles against massive enemy fleets. The entire game can be played free of charge, but new ships, weapons, and upgrades are available to purchase from the workshop. Our spy also tells us Novus Prime is the only game in Home that supports local co-op play.

OPTIMIZE YOUR HARDWARE

Even the stealthiest superspy can use a bit of help every now and then. These PS3 tools will improve anyone's performance.

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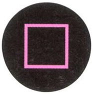
21. Dip Into the Stream

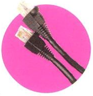
If you've already got an extensive library of videos, music, and pictures on your computer, you can stream them straight to your PS3. Just enable media sharing on your PC through Windows Media Player. (Mac users will have to rely on third-party software such as Elgato's EyeConnect.) Once you've activated media sharing, turn on your PS3 and select Search for Media Servers.

22. Get Organized



PSN's wide array of content can be appealing, but indulge long enough and your media library may start to look like a scene from *Katamari Damacy*. To remedy your browsing woes, simply press the Square button while perusing your list of games, save data, music or videos to categorize your downloads into manageable folders. You can toggle between categorization methods, like grouping content by name, album, and even format (such as PS3 games or PSone classics) by pressing the Square button multiple times.

23. Test Your Connection



Connecting your PS3 via Wi-Fi or wire is all about preference. However, when it comes to downloads, video streaming, and online gaming, extra speed can be extra convenient. If your PS3 is located within reach of an Ethernet cable, compare your wired vs. wireless bandwidth speeds by navigating to the Network Settings option in the Settings menu and selecting Internet Connection Test. We saw download speed gains when switching to a wired connection.

24. Print Your Evidence

Set the record straight by printing the face-melting screens stored on your PS3. First, connect and configure a compatible printer via PSN (http://bit.ly/976yum). Next, browse your image library, highlight the desired image, press the Triangle button to access the Options menu, and select Print.

25. Connect on the Go

Remote Play is a slick feature that allows you to access your PS3 via a Wi-Fi connection from your PSP. Visit the PlayStation Store and begin downloads, view stored videos and photos, and even play select games, all on the go.

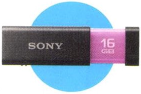
Here's a quick tutorial on how to pair your devices:

1. Use your PS3's USB cable to attach your PSP. Navigate to the Settings menu, choose the Remote Play Settings option and select Register Device.
2. Follow the on-screen instructions to pair the devices.
3. To activate Remote Play, go to the Network menu on your PSP and select Remote Play. When prompted, choose to establish a connection via the Internet or a private network and wait for the connection process to complete.

26. Call for Backup

The only problem with PSN's nigh-unlimited selection of content? It can fill your hard drive awfully fast. If you decide to install a larger hard drive, be sure to back up your data to a secondary storage device before making the switch. Otherwise, all your videos, pictures, music, and game data could potentially be lost.

Here's how:



1. Install a USB drive or Memory Stick with adequate free space.
2. Navigate to the Settings menu and select the System Settings option.
3. Select the Backup Utility option and choose Backup.
4. Confirm both warnings when prompted. The first explains that Trophy data will not be transferred during the backup, the second reminds you to ensure you have enough space.
5. Finally, choose the device to which your backup data will be stored.

To restore:

1. Install the storage device housing your backup data. Navigate to the Settings menu, select System Settings and Backup Utility.
2. Select Restore and, when prompted, select the appropriate storage device.

Note: Any new files you may have installed on your new hard drive will be deleted once backup data has been restored.

SOCIALIZE

Because spying isn't just a solitary act

27. Feed Facebook

Brag about your virtual exploits by publishing your Trophy acquisitions or recent PSN purchases directly to your Facebook News Feed via PSN. Access the Account Management menu and select the Facebook option at the bottom of the list to start annoying your friends.

28. Chat for Free

When setting up a chat session with family or friends, there's no need to crowd around the desktop—just take a seat on the couch and load up your PS3's included chat software. First, attach a headset and PS Eye (or other USB web camera) to your PS3. Next, navigate to your friends list and select Start New Chat. Now that you're in the chat room, select the Invite a Friend icon to invite up to five of your friends. To turn the session into a video chat, open the chat settings and toggle the Camera On option.

29. Fight the Abuse

Occasional encounters with tactless trash talkers are an unavoidable part of online gaming. To block a user, navigate to your friends list and select the Players Met option. Find the perpetrator, press the Triangle button, and select Add to Block List. If that isn't enough, steer your browser to the PSN Complaint Form (http://np.us.playstation.com/) to report users who have an astonishing inability to use civilized language.

The PTOM BOOK CLUB

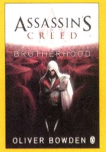
Read an actual book about your favorite characters (and make your mom happy)

By Tracey John

We play videogames because it's more fun than reading. Yet we can't help but be intrigued by the concept of the "printed word." Donning our smoking jackets and adjourning to our study, we set about poring over novels based on our favorite PlayStation franchises.

Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood

2010 Author: **Oliver Bowden**

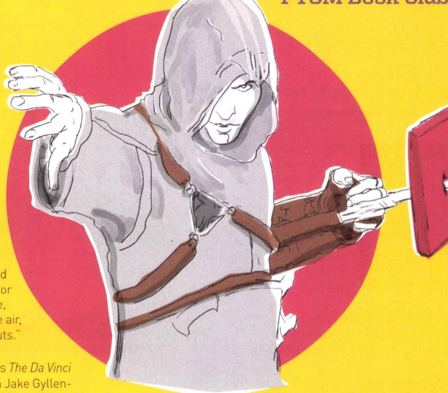


Plot The novel based on the third *Assassin's Creed* game tells the tale of Master Assassin Ezio Auditore da Firenze, who seeks vengeance against the tyrannical Borgia family for wrongs committed against the Assassins and the entirety of ancient Rome.

Unexpected Twist Inventor and painter Leonardo da Vinci is asked to join the Assassins, but declines. (And perhaps the famous Vitruvian Man is actually a detailed explanation of the best way to kill someone.)

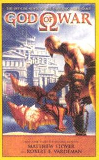
Steamiest Quote "[The whores] were clothed at first, but later they shed their garments... The nobler guests threw roasted chestnuts among them. The whores were then told to crawl about the floor on all fours like cattle, buttocks high into the air, to collect the chestnuts."

It's Like Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* mashed up with Jake Gyllenhaal's thriller *Source Code*, with a few scenes from Stanley Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut*.



God of War

2010 Authors: **Matthew Stover and Robert E. Vardeman**



Plot Based on the first *God of War* game, the novelization covers Kratos' quest to destroy Ares in order to free himself from his debt to the gods. While the book closely follows the game's plot, it also delves deeper into the gods' backstory, expounding on their relationships and even the battles waged without the presence of Kratos.

Unexpected Twist The book sheds light on Athena's perspective—even that one time when Hermes, her half-brother, tries desperately to hook up with her while rubbing his naked butt on her couch. While we're used to unusual sexual encounters in the *God of War* series, incest isn't one of them.

Steamiest Quote "In the middle of the room stood a half-naked woman... Her bare breasts were firm and high, capped by pink nubs that pointed at [Kratos] in wanton invitation."

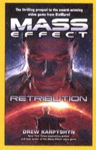
It's Like Edith Hamilton's *Mythology* done in the style of Frank Miller's *300*.

> "In the middle of the room stood a half-naked woman... Her bare breasts were firm and high, capped by pink nubs that pointed at [Kratos] in wanton invitation."

Illustrations by Ken Bousquet

Mass Effect: Retribution

2010 Author: **Drew Karpyshyn**



Plot Once again the Illusive Man, head honcho of pro-human group Cerebus, is up to no good. With a race of sentient machines called Reapers threatening to take over the universe, the Illusive Man takes drastic measures. He kidnaps former operative Paul Grayson and performs grotesque experiments on him using Reaper technology. Systems Alliance members First Lieutenant Kahlee Sanders and Captain David Anderson must rescue Grayson before it's too late.

Unexpected Twist Grayson loses control (thanks to a drug called Red Sand) but survives the experiment—then all hell breaks loose when Grayson struggles to escape Cerberus custody.

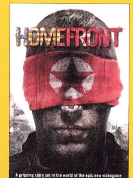
Steamiest Quote "One of [the Illusive Man's] assistants—a tall, gorgeous brunette—appeared, an empty glass in one hand and a bottle in the other. Her heels clacked sharply as she crossed the room's marble floor, her long legs making short work of the distance between them despite her tight black skirt."

It's Like *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* meets Philip K. Dick.

"Her heels clacked sharply as she crossed the room's marble floor, her long legs making short work of the distance between them despite her tight black skirt."

Homefront: The Voice of Freedom

2011 Authors: **John Milius and Raymond Benson**



Plot Through a series of unlikely occurrences—each more unlikely than the last—a unified Korea has taken over a beleaguered United States of America. As freedom crumbles and hope sinks like a stoolie wearing cement Nikes, journalist Ben Walker transforms himself into the Voice of Freedom, an on-air minister for the burgeoning American resistance movement.

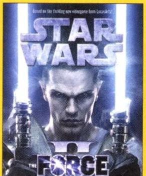
Unexpected Twist The Koreans somehow ignore Las Vegas until it's time to destroy Las Vegas.

Steamiest Quote "Walker rubbed his chin. 'I'm flattered. Let me think about it. In the meantime, sure, let's make a better transmitter. But first, let's go to bed.'"

It's Like The novelization of *Red Dawn*, if the United States was undone by ducks.

Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II

2010 Author: **Sean Williams**



Plot Starkiller, once Darth Vader's secret apprentice, lives on as a clone and struggles to find his identity and his lady friend from his former life, Juno Eclipse. Meanwhile, while working for the Rebel Alliance, Eclipse is captured by none other than Boba Fett, hired by Darth Vader to trap Starkiller. Starkiller must eventually meet Vader in a suspenseful confrontation, with Eclipse's life on the line.

Unexpected Twist We all know Vader will survive, but Starkiller's actions are still...surprising.

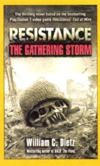
Steamiest Quote "[Eclipse] pulled herself up and kissed him properly, without fear, without regret, and without the smallest doubt that it was the most perfect thing to do in that moment. [Starkiller] held her as though he planned to never let her go."

It's Like *The Empire Strikes Back*, sanitized for our delicate eyes.

> "'I want you, *all* of you,' she growled softly... Then they were there, climbing to the very peak of passion, before falling into an ocean of pleasure."

Resistance: The Gathering Storm

2009 Author: **William C. Dietz**

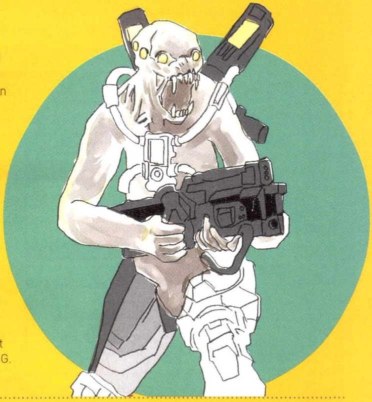

The thrilling novel based on the bestselling PlayStation 3 video game *Resistance: Fall of Man*
RESISTANCE
THE GATHERING STORM
William C. Dietz
Bestselling author of *HALO: The Flood*

Plot Set in the 1950s, *The Gathering Storm* has the alien species Chimera slowly taking over the globe, making its way from Russia to the United States. U.S. Army Ranger Lieutenant Nathan Hale, who's immune to the Chimera's parasitic virus, leads a Special Ops team in the good fight just as he did in the game.

Unexpected Twist Hale eventually discovers the real threat to mankind isn't alien in nature. Instead, it's a man-made poltical conspiracy. Now he must stop a person he once risked his life to protect from closing an unsavory deal with the Chimera that will deliver unexpected (and undesirable) consequences affecting the entire human population across the globe.

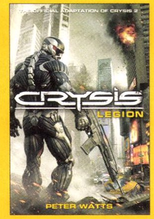
Steamiest Quote "Hale was careful to take his time, nudging his way into her wet warmth, their mutual passion building. Cassie made little sounds in the back of her throat and wrapped her legs around his torso as she urged him on. 'I want you, *all* of you,' she growled softly... Then they were there, climbing to the very peak of passion, before falling into an ocean of pleasure."

It's Like Robert Ludlum had an illicit affair with Danielle Steel set amid H.G. Wells' *War of the Worlds*.



Crysis: Legion

2011 Author: **Peter Watts**


THE OFFICIAL ADAPTATION OF CRYSIS 2
CRYSIS
LEGION
PETER WATTS

Plot Written as a series of classified documents, emails, and interview transcripts, the official adaptation of *Crysis 2* tells the story of a Marine called Alcatraz who's saved when Delta Force officer Laurence "Prophet" Barnes gives him his powered Nanosuit before committing suicide. The only problem: both the aliens and a shadowy private army have a bone to pick with Prophet, who's identified by, uh-oh, the Nanosuit.

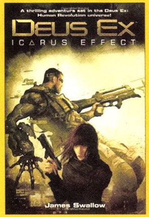
Unexpected Twist Alcatraz isn't who we think he is, and neither is Prophet or the suit. Chew on that for a bit.

Steamiest Quote "Strickland is a walking wet dream: mocha skin, half a head shorter than a man she's going up against, dark hair pulled back into a ponytail."

It's Like Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend*, but with Ceph instead of vampires. Plus, *Robocop*.

Deus Ex: Icarus Effect

2011 Author: **James Swallow**


A thrilling adventure set in the Deus Ex: Human Revolution universe!
DEUS EX
ICARUS EFFECT
James Swallow

Plot In the year 2027, when advances in nano-technology foster an even deeper socio-economic divide between the rich and poor, Secret Service agent Anna Kelso and mercenary Ben Saxon join forces as they uncover a conspiracy related to bio-augmentation.

Unexpected Twist It turns out both Saxon and Kelso are having their strings pulled, and the titular Icarus Effect refers to the nefarious goals of these insidious and unexpected manipulators.

Steamiest Quote "Locking his legs, Saxon pivoted and let his reflex booster implant ramp up to full. His nerves jangled with the sudden new input, the influence of the neuromuscular accelerator coursing through him."

It's Like Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* meets George Orwell's *1984*.

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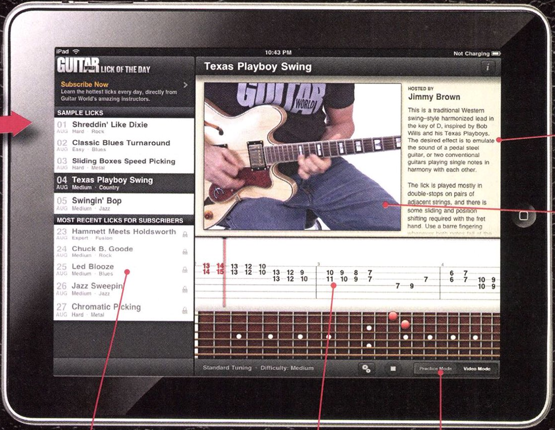
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Practice Mode
Video Mode

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Texas Playboy Swing

HOSTED BY
Jimmy Brown

This is a traditional Western swing-style harmonized lead in the key of D, inspired by Bob Wills and his Texas Playboys. The desired effect is to emulate the sound of a pedal steel guitar, or two conventional guitars playing single notes in harmony with each other.

The lick is played mostly in double-stops on pairs of adjacent strings, and there is some sliding and position shifting required with the fret hand. Use a barre fingering

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PlayStation The Official Magazine

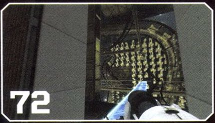
Reviews

Your essential guide to new releases

The Buggles once noted we couldn't possibly rewind, we've come too far. Well, in their infinite wisdom, the Buggles were wrong. Video may have killed the radio star, but here it is, 2011, and we've come too far not to take a step back.

We hit the rewind button this month, with blasts from the past. More and more game companies are mining their achives for high-definition remakes; we're seeing the classic Ubisoft games *Beyond Good & Evil*, as well as *Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time, Prince of Persia: The Two Thrones*, and *Prince of Persia: Warrior Within* packaged together. We put these games to the test, to see if we can indeed go home again. Some of us on the PTOM staff are skeptical.

We also revisit some classic arcade pals here. *Mortal Kombat* is born anew, the first game in the series to be published under the Warner Bros. logo. The fighting is as brutal as ever, and though the gameplay is 2D, this time we can view spine tears and decapitations in three delightful dimensions. Oh, and *Rush'N Attack: Ex-Patriot* reminds us all of the time we stopped being patriotic and started getting stabby in a Siberian prison. Those were, truly, the best of times.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PORTAL 2

Be careful with the portal gun. It shoots portals, some of which open to Hell and others opening to New Jersey. We're still debating which is more palatable.

74

OPERATION FLASHPOINT: RED RIVER

Tajikistan's Red River meets the clear, blue sky in Codemasters' (possibly) verdant first-person shooter.

84

VIRTUA TENNIS 4

The ball is in Sega's court now, and it serves up a whopper of a tennis game with stars such as Venus Williams, Roger Federer, and PS3-exclusive racketeers such as Boris Becker.

How we score our reviews...

10 Awesome
Instant classic that's nearly PlayStation perfection.

9 Excellent
Highly recommended and a great investment.

8 Great
Wonderful yet still possesses minor flaws.

7 Good
Enjoyable but with definite room for improvement.

6 Acceptable
A decent offering, but one that only satisfies in places.

5 Mediocre
A game that's both fun and frustrating in equal measure.

4 Flawed
Too flawed to be anything more than a curiosity.

3 Poor
A seriously defective game with no long-term appeal.

2 Awful
A disgrace to the bargain bin. Avoid it like the plague.

1 Raw Sewage
Apparently, feces *can* be pressed on a disc.

GOLD AWARD
PlayStation The Official Magazine

Our Highest Accolade
The gold award is presented to any game that we feel demonstrates significant innovation, near flawless gameplay, great graphics, and profound appeal.

SOCOM 4 U.S. Navy SEALs

Sea, err, and land

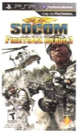
Something about *SOCOM 4: U.S. Navy SEALs* didn't jibe with us until the last mission. The six hours leading to the outstanding set-piece finale felt muddled, as if the campaign wasn't quite sure what to do with itself. Something was off. When the pieces finally fell into place, *SOCOM 4* let go of what the seminal PlayStation series was and accepted what it truly wanted to be. The last half-hour abandons the notion that stealth is a feasible option in what has unquestionably become an all-out action game. It felt liberating to just storm through a city under siege with reckless abandon. It also crystallized our concern about the campaign: This isn't a *SOCOM* game.

Info

Format PS3 **Pub** SCEA
Dev Zipper Interactive
Price $59.99 **ESRB** Mature
It's like having our reserve unit called into active duty again.

Separation Anxiety

SOCOM 4 made its point pretty clear from the get-go. Before we took our first step, a chopper smashed through the front of a building and nearly killed us. Two missions later we'd already unlocked the Trophy for clearing 100 kills. From start to finish, this is as straightforward as an over-the-shoulder shooter gets: Take cover, kill everything, roll credits. Objectives don't even fit within the single-player's narrow view. The rare task is merely a simple sidebar to the stop-and-pop shooting galleries, and the creative scope limits these brief instances to planting bombs and protecting a teammate hacking a computer. *SOCOM 4* plays it safe and avoids taking any risks, so there isn't any real payoff. It kept shoving action down our throat, but it failed to do so in an original or exciting way.



Want More?

The *SOCOM: Fireteam Bravo* games are great fun with a strong community keeping the online gaming going. They remind us why we loved the franchise in the first place.

Contrary to tradition, we spent most of the solo game chucking grenades toward the middle of bad-guy bases, blasting boss choppers with found rocket launchers, and unloading our entire ammo stash into seemingly infinite waves of enemies. This may sound like a rockin' good time, but fighting these big battles from behind concrete barriers is dull to an alarming degree. For every daunting army of evil jerks waiting to die, there's an excess of explosive barrels nearby; when tanks roll up, access to a devastating airstrike is just around the corner. Each encounter seems specifically structured for an easy win. The trick to having fun is finding the best way to go about attacking.

Many of the encounters let us choose between going head-on into the fray or sneaking around to get the

Note to enemy types: Hiding near explosive barrels is poor form.

drop on everyone. No matter how we sliced it, situations invariably exploded into an itty-bitty warzone. Having two squads to command—one for balls-out assault, the other for hush-hush recon—helped to encourage the binary tactics, but blind luck and strong strategy carried equal weight. Sometimes we'd successfully line up our team and sweep an enemy squad; other times our idiot allies would blow an infiltration by standing in the open or attacking too early. It's unfortunate that awful A.I. is the most familiar element of *SOCOM 4*.

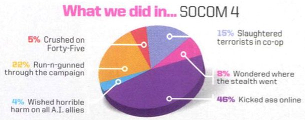
Improperly performed, the spinal realignment technique can end poorly for the recipient.

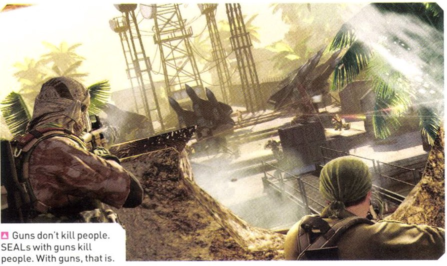
Using the Move controls give a bit of an accuracy advantage. Don't worry: The laser sight's helpful, but hardly game-breaking.

Leave Us Alone, Together

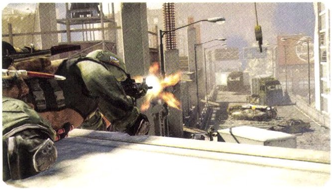
When the A.I. isn't around to muck up a situation, *SOCOM 4* shows signs of greatness. Yes, it's jarring to go from slaughtering hundreds in broad daylight to avoiding everyone in the nighttime recon ops, but the anxious atmosphere ramps up when we're suddenly slinking through an area alone—though we missed the protection of four other soldiers when things got hairy. But firefights are rare in these stealth missions. Killing almost always led to losing, whether it was through insta-fail detection (ugh, seriously?) or overwhelming enemy fire. The recon operations are relatively easy, though, and far more guided than the rest of the game. Markers and radio communications funneled us through the "correct" path as we infiltrated compounds and planted bugs or bombs on high-profile targets. Maybe it's residual desire for classic *SOCOM*, but we dug these short missions despite their controlled nature.

The five-player cooperative mode occupies an awkward middle ground between *SOCOM 4*'s best and worst. With just two mission types—assassination and espionage—set in condensed versions of campaign maps, co-op's fairly limited. Still, enemies rarely assaulted our A.I. squadmates during the solo campaign, so we were relieved they finally had other humans to shoot at.





Guns don't kill people. SEALs with guns kill people. With guns, that is.



> "Multiplayer is energetic, exciting, and tense."

Co-op is as much of a forceful action game or stealth-centric op as we made it, and it's inherently entertaining to roll around with four friends and pump fools full of lead. Once we finished a map, however, we didn't really have the urge to play it again, so the replay value is limited to masochists looking to take on a higher enemy density and difficulty.

In the face of these flaws, we were ultimately content with the action-heavy direction. *SOCOM 4* might play it safe, but at a fundamental level it works—thanks mainly to its solid core mechanics. Granted, the single-player doesn't stand out in any way and the co-op is a mixed bag, but with online multiplayer, the game successfully breaks free of its irritatingly by-the-book design.

Group Think

SOCOM 4's rule of thumb seems to be "the less A.I., the better." Indeed, multiplayer is *SOCOM*'s saving grace. Given that developer Zipper Interactive is responsible for the series in the first place, we had little reason to believe they'd botch it: Online has always been the franchise's defining factor, and when flubbed campaigns rained on our parade in earlier editions, multiplayer always made up for it.

This is *SOCOM* multiplayer at its finest, and it embraces the idea that *SOCOM 4* is two types of shooters. Standard matches are frenetic, with players charging to the frontline as grenades fly wildly, machine-gun fire echoing in the air. Much as we dig these riots, we prefer the methodology of the Classic rules. We cherished our life in each no-respawn match. This is a slower, more subdued multiplayer mode dedicated to the die-hards disappointed by the aggressive new angle. Players take it seriously...and with good reason.

When it comes to the kill, Classic is incomparably satisfying. The gross slapping sound of a bullet biting through a brain was one thing, but knowing the dude was dead and gone gave us a great sense of having contributed to our team's success. It was a high we couldn't get enough of.

The objective-based gameplay central to *SOCOM 4*'s competitive multiplayer is all the more enjoyable thanks to some smart modifications to the familiar formula. We lived to protect our explosives from pesky bomb squads, and when the tables turned, we loved disarming devices as an armored bomb tech. Racing to capture enemy territory takes a turn, too, with enemy HQs—primed for obliteration via airstrike—opening up when we conquered the map.

SOCOM 4 is consistently rewarding, both in terms of in-game gratification and personal progression. We didn't access new weapons and attachments at the assaulting frequency of, say, a *Call of Duty*, so each unlock felt remarkably substantial.

SOCOM 4's multiplayer is energetic, exciting, and tense, and we can't wait to dedicate an embarrassing amount of our time to playing more of it. It's a stark contrast to the uninspired single-player campaign, but *SOCOM 4: U.S. Navy SEALs*' online exemplifies everything we love about the series. It's an invigorating example of how exciting team-based multiplayer can be, and of what the campaign should have been. MITCH DYER

Cast List

THE COMMANDER

Gray
Stoic and straight-edged, this is a by-the-book born leader.

THE HOTHEAD

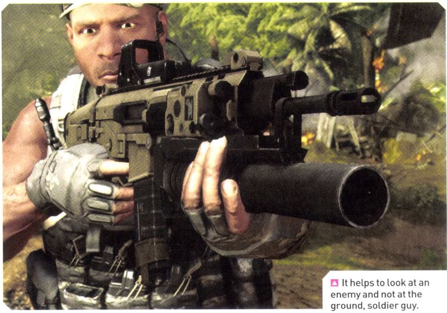
Forty-Five
She's the feisty, cute, and kinda frightening stealth specialist.

THE RIGHT-HAND MAN

Wells
He leads the assault squad like a tank wearing a hat.

THE LOUDMOUTH

Schweitzer
Our heavy-weapons specialist never shuts up, but his big guns do the real talking.



It helps to look at an enemy and not at the ground, soldier guy.

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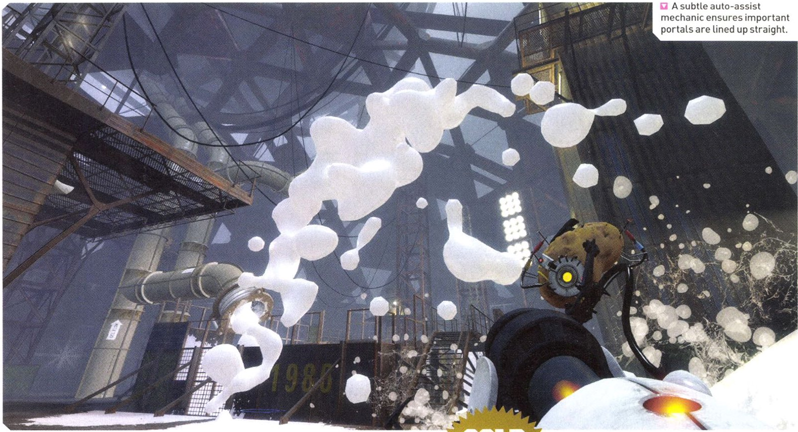


A subtle auto-assist mechanic ensures important portals are lined up straight.

Portal 2

Have your cake and eat it too

GOLD AWARD
PlayStation
The Official Magazine

Info

Format PS3
Pub Valve / EA
Dev Valve
Price $59.99
ESRB Everyone 10+
It's like being best buds with *2001: A Space Odyssey's* HAL.

Explosions are easy. Creative and intelligent game design, on the other hand, is not. That's what made the original *Portal* so special. Rather than try to dazzle us with over-the-top action or cheap Hollywood cinematics, the team at Valve won us over with a humble game balancing dark humor with perhaps the most clever and rewarding puzzle mechanic ever conceived: the portal. It allowed us to create an entrance with one trigger and an exit with the other to craft a passage from point A to point B. *Portal* offered no bullets and no bombs, just inspired puzzles and one psychotic robot overseer.

Portal 2, then, has quite the legacy to live up to, but it also enjoys a substantial head start since it shares many fundamental gameplay qualities with the original—from its basic premise and mechanics to its sense of humor and principal characters. Hell, it even borrows the first game's end-level elevators and in-game tutorial. Yet, each of these elements has been expanded or altered in some unexpected way.

The story once again follows pleasantly understated heroine Chell as she attempts to escape from Aperture Science's labyrinthine chambers—where testing seems to be conducted simply for the sake of testing—only now the chambers have begun to crumble with age. It seems poor Chell was kept sedated for quite some time. While the plot doesn't unfold with the first game's slow, engrossing revelation, it does offer a fascinating glimpse into the history of Aperture by providing a series a dots and allowing us to connect them for ourselves—an elegant approach to storytelling.

Still Alive

The story also explores the origins of the passive-aggressive GLaDOS, who's back with more distressingly matter-of-fact statements. Her distinctive brand of deadpan comedy remains as funny as ever, but this time her grim wit is complemented by bumbling robot Wheatley (brilliantly voiced by Stephen Merchant, who's playing a more demented version of his

Five Easy Steps For using Steam on PS3

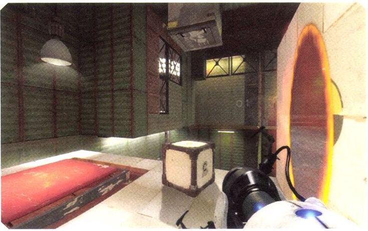
Initiate
Select the "Steam" option from the streamlined main menu.

Engage
Create a Steam account right on the PS3.

Search
Build a friends list by searching for PC and Mac buddies.

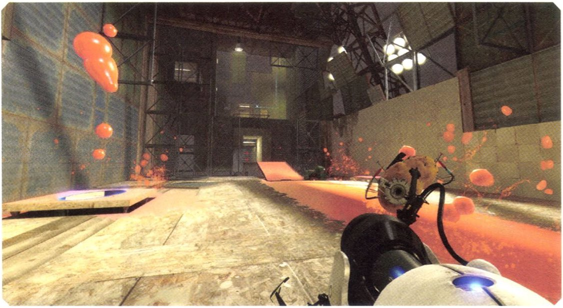
Invite
Send an invite to any player on any platform, all from the same menu.

Enjoy
Seriously, it's that easy. Cross-platform play has arrived!



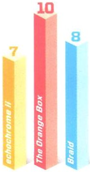
Though *Portal 2* is still just a series of disconnected rooms, at least this time the rooms are larger and filled with more traps, water hazards, and moving platforms.

The soundtrack kicks in whenever we're close to solving the puzzle.



character from the Ricky Gervais series *Extras*). As with the first game, the humor is enjoyable in and of itself and makes the brainy gameplay feel approachable and unpretentious.

In fact, the laughs provide a welcome respite from the problem-solving mental strain. The puzzles are downright sneaky, but each one holds an ingenious solution. One mindbender even required us to set up two different solutions before triggering both simultaneously—and it all rested on the proper placement of a single cube. That's pretty novel.



ScorePole

A puzzler built like a shooter? *Portal 2* defies direct comparison.

Amazingly, *Portal 2* made us feel like geniuses without becoming too frustrating. Every time we approached a new puzzle, we just *knew* there had to be a clever solution, and there were plenty of ways we could experiment to find it. We often felt stuck, but somehow managed to make it through anyway.

There's also more play variety than in the original, so fans of the first game shouldn't expect to breeze through the campaign. Standard buttons, cubes, and turrets return, but they're joined by cubes that redirect lasers, floor catapults that launch us across the room, light bridges that extend through any open portal, and three different gels, each of which sees countless imaginative applications. Each new element is introduced gradually so the game remains fresh without becoming overwhelming.

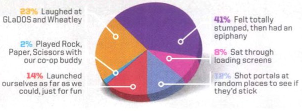
Companion Cubed

If there's an issue with *Portal 2*, it's that we rarely felt adequately rewarded for, or empowered by, our puzzle-solving successes. The gameplay flow does get broken up—often in unexpected ways like chase scenes and brief moments of exposition—but the sequel's considerably longer campaign would have benefited by somehow acknowledging our achievements. The original *Portal* left us craving more, but now that we have it, we were somewhat exhausted and relieved when we completed *Portal 2*.

Then again, single-player is only part of the equation here. *Portal 2* also features a full cooperative campaign retaining every positive aspect of the solo experience (including its endearing humor) but adds its own set of mind-blowing puzzles that cannot be completed without teamwork. It's a radical, refreshing addition to the formula.

In a way, we half-expected this sequel to be the ultimate realization of *Portal's* true potential (since the first game was, arguably, just an experiment). Instead, much like *BioShock 2*, the single-player portion can't quite recapture the magic of the original, but there's no denying *Portal 2* is a brilliant and satisfying game in its own right.

What we did in... Portal 2



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SCOTT BUTTERWORTH

Operation Flashpoint: Red River retains the frustrating bliss that made *Dragon Rising* what it was...for better or worse.

Operation Flashpoint
Red River

Up creek, bring friends with paddles

Info

PS3
FLASHPOINT
RED RIVER
RP

Format PS3
Pub Codemasters
Dev Codemasters
Price $59.99
ESRB Mature
It's like taking a long hiking trip in a warzone.

A learn-adapt-apply method is essential to success in *Operation Flashpoint: Red River*—it's also the first-person shooter's largest failing.

Relief was the sole reward for the huge chunks of time we lost to terrible checkpoint placement. Missions claiming to have taken just 20 minutes actually ate up hours. In one particularly grueling instance, we spent three hours failing to progress through the same four-minute firefight. Replaying sections flat-out sucks, but having to once again hike from point A to point B while listening to repeated radio conversations is just brutal.

A dearth of save points make even less sense when considering the game's structure. This is a long-distance shooter. Wide-open landscapes replace the usual corridors, and our guys weren't the only ones armed with scoped rifles. Since we were just as susceptible to bullets as our enemies (one shot does the trick), skilled snipers could drop entire squads from 800 feet away. That vulnerability lent incredible, exhilarating tension that eventually translated to an intense feeling of accomplishment, but it was hard not to feel cheated when an enemy's clean kill kicked us back 20 minutes.

Still, *Red River* is so far removed from what we currently associate with the FPS genre that, despite changing very little from *Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising*, it's a revitalizing reminder of the originality these games can offer. The vast majority of me-too shooters wouldn't dare color outside the lines like this. Technical issues and gameplay glitches like gross texture and object pop-in and A.I.-challenged enemies perpetually running into walls hold the game back, but if the series cleaned itself up it could earn some serious kudos.

However, this isn't conducive to competitive online multiplayer in the slightest, so Codemasters wisely left it out. Instead, *Red River* emphasizes cooperation. Friends automatically improve any mediocre experience, but playing with other humans is especially helpful in *Red River* since it eliminates the game's embarrassing A.I. teammates—NPCs acknowledged orders but didn't carry them out; our guys often refused to heal us; and, on three different occasions, our squad simply stopped following us altogether.

Oddly enough, the cooperative-capable campaign still isn't the ideal way to play *Red River*. Instead, co-op play meets its beautiful middle ground in the Fire Team engagements where rescuing pilots and defending bases from waves of enemies is as methodical and tactical as the series meant it to be. It's faster-paced, more fulfilling, and cuts out the crummy character conversations and marathon-length walks through Tajikistan's countryside. MITCH DYER

PlayStation
The Official Magazine
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Yoostar 2

Format **PS3** Pub **Yoostar Entertainment** Dev **Blitz Games** Price **$49.99** ESRB **Teen**

Star Trek: The Next Genera
Back
More
Perform
Quick Play

There's no way around it: Movie karaoke is humiliating, but such is the premise of *Yoostar 2*, a game that uses the PS Eye to allow players to become characters in Hollywood films. Acting out Mike Tyson's singing cameo in *The Hangover* can be fun, but only if no one is watching—or, better yet, if pals join in. If *everyone* looks like idiots while reenacting the bar scene from *Shaun of the Dead*, then no one feels quite so stupid. Amateur thespians can also improvise against video backgrounds then upload the results to be rated by the *YooStar* community. It's nothing groundbreaking, but it's simple fun for those looking for some self-made party-time entertainment. ANNE LEWIS

PlayStation 6

Warriors Legends of Troy

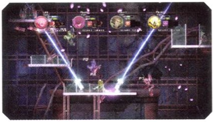
Format **PS3** Pub **Tecmo Koei** Dev **Koei** Price **$59.99** ESRB **Mature**

As historians note and the third-person brawler *Warriors: Legends of Troy* confirms, the Trojan War was fought among the Greeks, Trojans, and Amazons, primarily by one person stabbing his way through hordes of disinterested enemies in much the same manner as ancient Chinese conflicts are portrayed in the *Dynasty Warriors* series. Dumb fun boils over into awful stew when we, as the Greek Achilles, are forced to stab toes during a two-part and cliché-addled boss fight against a giant statue complete with respawning zombie minions, quick-time events, and enough *hamartia* to choke mighty Zeus himself. GREG ORLANDO

PlayStation 4

Moon Diver

Format **PSN** Pub **Square Enix** Dev **feelplus** Price **$14.99** ESRB **Everyone 10+**



Fans of Capcom's *Strider* will feel right at home with *Moon Diver*, mainly because the two games share a director: Koichi Yotsui. Like *Strider*, *Moon Diver* is full of precise platforming and loads of bad guys to slice to ribbons, but it doesn't quite reach the lofty heights of its spiritual predecessor. *Diver's* problem is that it's surprisingly dull for such a fast-paced game. Bland environments, reused enemies, and repetitive combat make even short levels feel drawn out. It's more fun when played online, but without some buddies to help us cope with the high difficulty level, we're forced to grind to increase our stats, further adding to the tedium. PHIL THEOBALD

PlayStation 5

DLC Roundup

NFS: Hot Pursuit
Three for All Bundle

Price **$19.99** ESRB **Everyone 10+**

This hefty bundle contains all of the content found in the Armed & Dangerous, Porsche Unleashed, and Lamborghini Untamed downloadable add-ons. That means lots of new cars, extra multiplayer race modes, new events, and additional Trophies to fawn over.

Dragon Age II
The Black Emporium

Price **$9.99** ESRB **Mature**

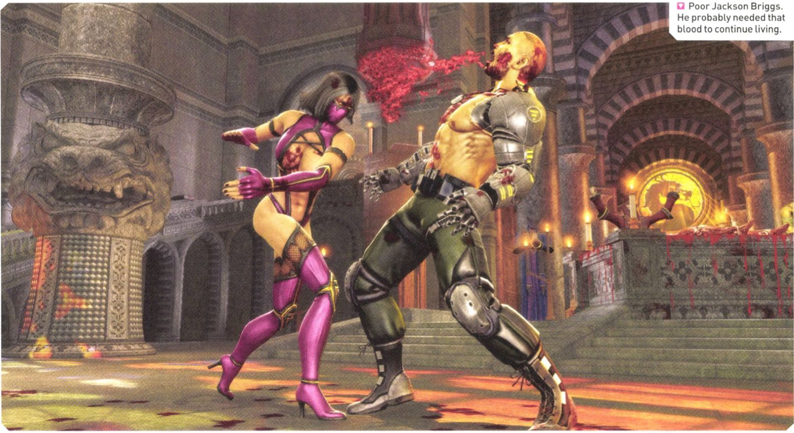
This dark and eerie subterranean market is loaded with more than just free loot and a handful of shops hawking cool new questing gear. It also holds the Mirror of Transformation for changing the appearance of characters and a cute but deadly Marabi war hound to call our very own.

Download of the Month

Castlevania: Lords of Shadow
Reverie

Price $9.99 **ESRB** Mature

Picking up where the whip-wielding protagonist Gabriel last left off in *Lords of Shadow*, this extended demon-slaying adventure isn't lacking in beast-carving action or puzzles. It also lets us hop into the lightning-infused shoes of a bloodthirsty vampire child who's ready to tear through the unholy hordes.



Poor Jackson Briggs. He probably needed that blood to continue living.

Mortal Kombat

The Tao of spine ripping

Info

Format PS3
Pub Warner Bros. Interactive Ent.
Dev NetherRealm Studios
Price $59.99
ESRB Mature
It's like a most violent homecoming.

Liu Kang has just been elected the mayor of Painsville—by a landslide, no less. He's walking like a zombie—possessed, stiff-legged, arms out—toward the sorcerer Quan-Chi. Bam! Kang's ticket is duly punched by the pale, bald Chi: one hit, two hits, three hits, four...and while it's all very beautiful, none of it is pretty.

Sometimes, in fact, it's downright ugly. After getting punched in the groin by actor Johnny Cage, Princess Kitana retaliates, taking her folded fan blades and punching them through the back of Cage's skull, then teleporting to face her foe so she can stab him in his eye sockets. The gruesome display is highlighted with an X-ray view and slow motion: bones crunch, blood spurts, and tendons tear.

Mortal Kombat has reinvented itself, and the result is, well, *Mortal Kombat*. The game has shed its recent three-dimensional fighting plane for a more traditional two-dimensional approach, it abandoned digitized actors for polygonal ones, and it discarded its focus on weapons and individual fighting styles. What remains is a straightforward, brutal fighting game, one running long and hard on gore and iconic characters.

Stripped of its artifice and its baggage, this new *Kombat* proves leaner and sleeker in many ways. It should go a long way to restoring the game's notoriety, too.

It's Official, You Suck

Combat is fast-paced, and the developers have put the emphasis on combination attacks. Stringing together punches and kicks enables us to, say, knock a foe into the air and then juggle him multiple times. Ground-based combos allow for repeated head and body shots that can be concluded successfully with a leg sweep or a throw, and we're often moved—compelled, really—to see about stacking on one more hit for good measure.

Timeline Kombat through the ages

1992

Mortal Kombat
(Arcade, consoles, 1992)
Seven playable characters, one gory quarter-sucking dream.

1993

Mortal Kombat II
(Arcade, consoles, 1993)
Introduced non-fatal Friendships and Babalities.

1995

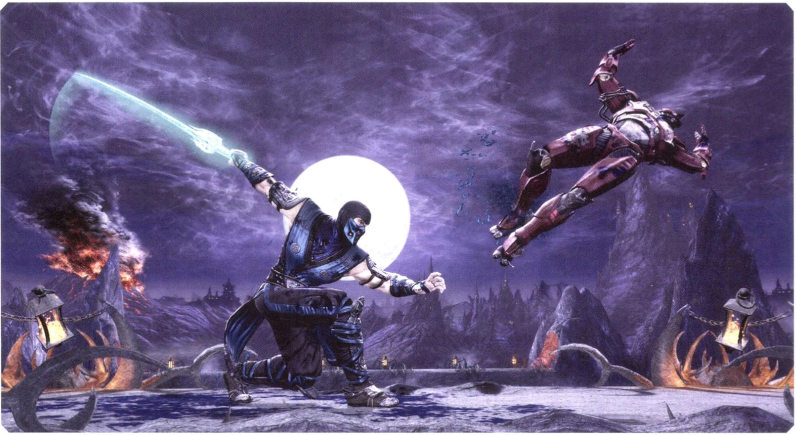
Mortal Kombat 3
(Arcade, consoles, 1995)
Added a run button and chained combinations.

2000

Mortal Kombat: Special Forces
(PlayStation, 2000)
This adventure starred Jackson "Jax" Briggs. It's best forgotten.

2008

Mortal Kombat vs. DC Universe
(PlayStation 3, 2008)
Brought together two great universes for blood-free Kombat.



▲ Sub-Zero can summon an ice sword in combat.

Combos are easily performed, even with clumsy hands controlling stupid fingers. An in-game moves list has been graciously provided for all characters, but experimentation bears fruit, too. Fighting games have often proved impenetrable or overly dense, but this is not *Kombat*. It's not a simple game by any means, but it is accessible. Buttonmashing neophytes can come to *Kombat's* arenas and find success. Moreover, they'll be able to perform cool, brain-crushing maneuvers as they go.

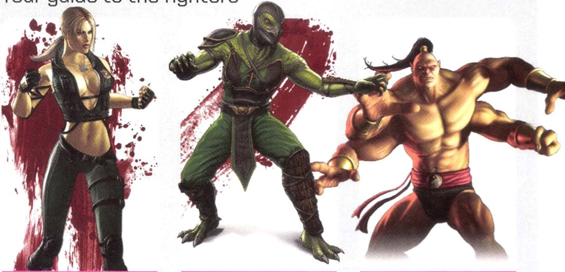
The rest of the package is fleshed out nicely, and all of it helps to tell a story. The backgrounds are lively and animated to the point of distraction. We can sneak peeks of a larger world beyond our skirmish: trees moan and grimace; subway cars rocket past us; prisoners hanged from trees shake and sputter; and handlers attempt to corral a huge, chained beast. The backgrounds also allow us to perform stage-specific Fatalities (powerful post-match attacks) like shoving our foes' heads into moving steel or knocking their bodies off of platforms. A battle-damage system helps further *Kombat's* tale. As a fight progresses, a combatant's clothes will tear, his skin will bruise and peel, and he'll show gaping wounds.

The X-ray Dilemma

The game also introduces the aforementioned decidedly hyper-violent X-ray attacks. A power meter—fueled by successful combinations and hits—fills during combat. This meter has three bars; when partially filled and successfully tapped into, it allows us to perform an enhanced special move or interrupt an enemy's combination. Fully filled, watch out. Pressing the L2 and R2 buttons ▸▸

Kombateers!

Your guide to the fighters



THE HUMANS

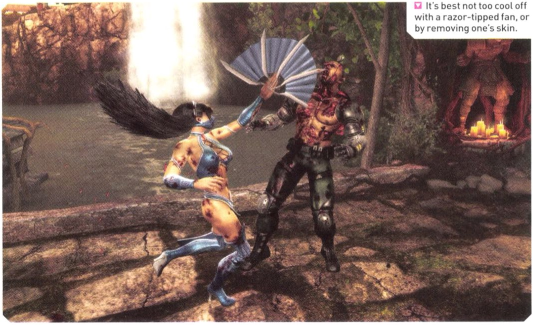
We might want to hang out with these guys: Johnny Cage, Liu Kang, Kung Lao, Sonya Blade.

THE MASKED MEN(?)

Mortal Kombat loves its masked ninjas: Reptile, Scorpion, Sub-Zero, Smoke, Noob-Saibot.

THE FREAKS

Four arms? Oversized razor teeth? No problem: Baraka, Shiva, Goro, Kabal.



It's best not too cool off with a razor-tipped fan, or by removing one's skin.

The telekinetic Ermac is a collection of souls. He's his own best friend.

"There's a wonderful bit of fan service: the inclusion of kombat-loving god of war, Kratos."

unleashes a powerful but blockable (or avoidable) X-ray attack.

If we score a strike here, the game removes control from our hands and plays a brief cutscene highlighting an explicit bit of violence to curl the ESRB's collective toes: Groins are smashed. Skulls are shattered. Femur bones disintegrate when stabbed with long knives. The vile wizard Quan-Chi commands a foe to grab and snap his own neck. These scenes are arresting, a horribly amazing reward for a job well done.

Yet it's hard to fully celebrate the installment of these moves. X-ray attacks are not a sure thing, but when they hit, they can take upward of 50 percent of a fighter's health in one fell swoop. It's hard to imagine any circumstance in which one simple move doing that much damage doesn't imbalance play. And beyond their great destructive power, the attacks have no lingering effects, and this serves to forcibly yank us from the gruesome fantasy. Getting kicked in the face by a guy who's had his femurs reduced to pulp will do that to us.

Possibly more problematic: We're not comfortable when a fighting game takes control away from us during a match. As games become more hyperbolic, we're oftentimes faced with the prospect of watching a successful mega-combo play out. But fighting games are, and should be, about action, adrenaline, emotion, and it feels wrong to be drawn out of the fray, even for a brief period of time.

Kombat Kalling

Kombat calls us to the violent things of this world. A wonderful story mode lets us replay the events of the first three games. It's a superb introduction as it puts all the game's heroes and hellraisers in context and also allows us to play as multiple characters including, among others, Sub-Zero, Sonya Blade, Jackson Briggs, Smoke, Scorpion, and Kitana. Here, we're forced to learn each character's holds, combos, throws, and peculiarities if we're to proceed.

Five for fighting More reasons Kombat is king

DLC?
Yes, it's coming. Kenshi and Scarlet are first. And yes, we want more characters, such as Nimbus Terrafaux. (Look him up!)

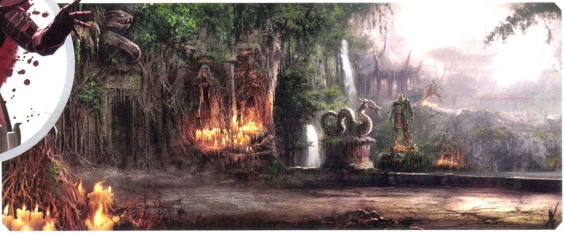
ONLINE PLAY
Reach out via the Internet and divest a sucker of his spine. That's right, he's spinless now. We're big fans of the eight-man King of the Hill mode.

3D SUPPORT
What better use for your new 3D TV than splattered fighters? *Mortal Kombat* is a 2D fighter with support for the third. Where's our glasses?

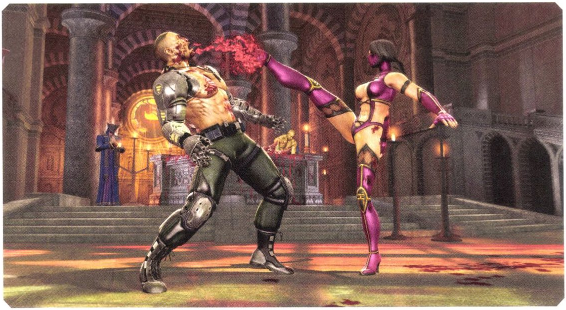
I HAVE NOTHING FURTHER TO SAY
1907 - 2007

FATAL ACCOMPLI
An exceedingly helpful and welcome mode tells us exactly how to perform a character's Fatalities. We can also unlock new Fatalites in the Krypt.

THE KRYPT
The French might consider it revolutionary, but unlocking items by guillotining victims? It's weird, but cool. There's also junk to be found here, too.

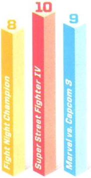


This tranquil scene will soon be marred by blood, bone chips, and hurt feelings. *Mortal Kombat*, it should be noted, has some of the best backgrounds we've ever seen in a videogame. Moreover, many of these backgrounds have Fatalities linked to them.



In forcing us to jump from character to character, we're also made to continually adjust, to reassess, and to try new tactics. Playing multiple characters in this way, we're afforded insight into the game's balancing. We can knock *Kombat* for its X-ray attacks and the great havoc they can wreak with little-to-no player effort, but the characters themselves are all equals in terms of fighting prowess.

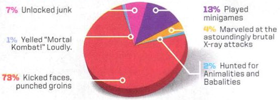
For *Kombat* pros, the story mode offers a deeper glimpse into the mythos. We get to bear witness to the death of the first Sub-Zero and watch in horror as Special Forces soldier Jackson Briggs has his arms violently ripped off. And although the mode is padded out with numerous segments where we must pummel the perennial whipping-boy Cage and the inhuman Baraka, we also get to see some real character development via animated cutscenes. The game even does its best to humanize the yellow-clad ninja demon Scorpion. It's a fine trade-off.



ScorePole

Near-flawless victory! *Mortal Kombat* stands toe-to-toe with the best of them.

What we did in... Mortal Kombat



There's even a wonderful bit of fan service for PlayStation owners: the inclusion of Sony's kombat-loving god of war, Kratos. We can't help but smile at this, and are pleased to note he fits in well with *Kombat's* usual assortment of creeps and weirdos.

We were drawn in to this story and *Kombat's* now-revisionist history; the sweeping tale alone was enough to carry us through to its conclusion. More incentive was not needed but still rather freely given: a grand prize awaits, and each successful battle wins us Kombat currency, allowing us to unlock all manner of goodies including new costumes, sketches, music clips, Fatalities, and goofy stick-figure Fatality drawings.

Finish Him!

Everything old, pardon the worn sentiment, is new again with *Kombat*. Its closets have been purged of skeletons, its musty torture rooms aired out. The game ripped our hearts out and showed them, still beating, to us all those years ago, and we can't help but feel this is a triumphant return to those blood-soaked days.

Time has passed. We're older, stupider, fatter. But sometimes, not too often, we can go home again. Even if the sheets are covered in entrails and spinal fluid. GREG ORLANDO

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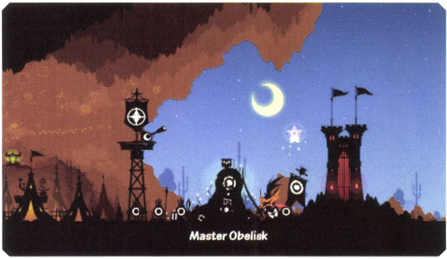
Patapon 3

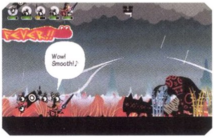
Groovin' forward

Info

Format PSP
Pub SCEA
Dev SCEJ
Price $19.99
ESRB Everyone
It's like a fresh beat for the drums of war.

Just when we thought we retired our beat-bustin' fingers, *Patapon 3* comes along to get our digits dancing again. The third installment retains series' mainstays, such as issuing rhythmic drum commands to order units to attack and move, but changes things up by replacing vast eye-shaped armies with a small-scale, three-Patapon team led by our customizable, superpowered uber-hero. The result is a familiar and fun experience that nixes micromanagement without sacrificing depth, letting us focus on what matters most: combat.

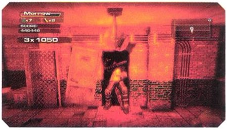




Making a mistake typically results in death, which gets frustrating in later levels (hint: be sure to rely on defensive drum commands to ward off powerful enemy attacks). But between learning skills, leveling up our party, and upgrading all the equipment we won in battles, our heroes soon became a force to be reckoned with. Each Patapon has access to a class tree, allowing for a customizable group: We could turn our spear thrower into a mounted warrior or evolve our archer into a healer. The whole experience is just as addictive as its predecessors, and now that it's got infrastructure cooperative and competitive multiplayer, we no longer have to face this adventure alone.

PlayStation 8

RYAN TALJONICK



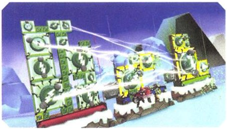
Rush'N Attack
Ex-Patriot

Format **PSN** Pub **Konami** Dev **Vatra Games**
Price **$9.99** ESRB **Mature**

Give a guy communists to kill and 99 percent of the time it's a fun game. Welcome to the one percent: poor platforming and a clichéd story make this follow-up to the '80s-era arcade game an unremarkable experience even if the combat is, at times, enjoyable. The game's stuttering framerate might be forgivable if its visuals weren't lackluster. Add in a dull audio track, glitches, and game freezes and *Rush'N Attack* had us wishing it had stayed covert for a few more decades.

PlayStation 4

HOLLANDER COOPER



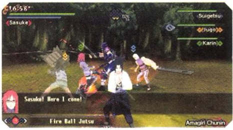
Slam Bolt Scrappers

Format **PSN** Pub **SOE** Dev **Fire Hose Games**
Price **$14.99** ESRB **Everyone**

Blending *Tetris*-like puzzle action with brawling and tower-defense elements, *Slam Bolt Scrappers* is a clever mashup with a hefty learning curve. Players use a cartoonish warrior to plug colorful blocks into a tower grid to form weapons that bombard an opposing tower. Pummeling swarms of flying beasts yields fresh blocks to use, but we also had to contend with the enemy's beefy brawler too. Creativity shines through the chaos even when the on-screen action hits a dizzying crescendo.

PlayStation 7

NATHAN MEUNIER



Naruto Shippuden
Kizuna Drive

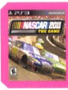
Format **PSP** Pub **Namco Bandai** Dev **Namco Bandai**
Price **$39.99** ESRB **Teen**

Multiplayer is clearly *Kizuna Drive's* focus. Linking up with three friends to pummel wave after wave of enemy attackers can be fun, especially during strategic boss battles and when pulling off elaborate team attacks that require precise button taps from each player. Playing alone is a different story. The A.I. characters aren't as helpful as they should be, and the small size of the arenas and the dull combo system cause the action to grow stale. PHIL THEOBALD

PlayStation 6

NASCAR The Game 2011

Not just driving in circles anymore



Info

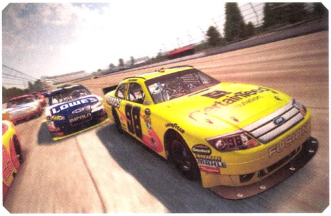
Format PS3
Pub Activision **Dev** Eutechnyx
Price $59.99 **ESRB** Everyone
It's like the first credible NASCAR racing videogame.

Good news, race fans: there's no need to don your No. XX [sponsor][manufacturer][pseudo-car model] replica helmet when buying *NASCAR The Game 2011*. It's the first NASCAR game in perhaps...forever that looks good, drives well, and captures the distinct attributes of America's favorite race series.

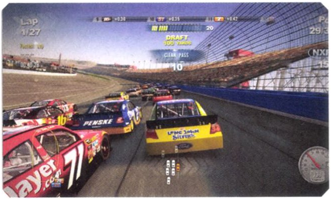
All the current teams, drivers, and cars are available to compete over a 36-race season, and while there are only two road courses in the mix, there's finally enough nuance infused in the experience to elevate it beyond a seemingly endless series of left turns. Nice touches like the Proximity Radar that assists in navigating through the often packed-together fields and the contrail-like Draft Wake Effect—which transforms passing into its own follow-the-leader minigame—help reveal and illuminate NASCAR racing's particular challenges.

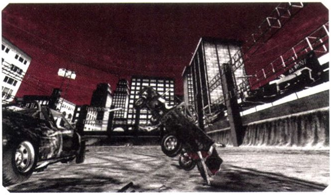
The steering feel and feedback does still need work: driving in traffic requires precision and *NASCAR 2011* will never be mistaken for a *Gran Turismo* game. Taps to rear-quarter panels of cars virtually guarantees a spinout and lead to way too many flow-killing yellow-flag restarts. But these are niggling issues; the franchise is moving up through the driving-game field and may finally be in contention for a podium position come next season. ROGER BURCHILL

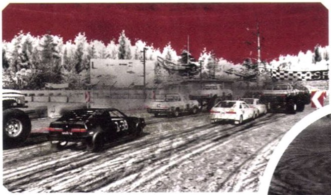
PlayStation The Official Magazine **7**



NASCAR Experience Points are earned for a variety of on- and offline in-race actions, with rewards and upgrades unlocked while ranking-up.







No, seriously, this isn't a PS2 game.

Mayhem 3D

Our eyes! Our poor, suffering eyes!

Info

Format PS3
Pub Rombax Games
Dev Left Field Productions
Price $39.99
ESRB Everyone 10+
It's like a cheapo B-movie action sequence.

True to the B-movie grindhouse style it's trying to emulate, *Mayhem 3D* is a no-budget piece of schlock that lasts about 90 minutes. A demolition derby arcade racer painted up with a *Sin City/Mad World* graphics filter, the game offers standard demolition derby racing, a king of the hill-style knockout mode (Domination), and an ill-advised straight race mode (Banger Derby). Online and local splitscreen multiplayer are included.

Mayhem 3D isn't without its brief charms (ramming cars into one another is hard to mess up), but even the cool visual style can't mask the embarrassing PS2-era graphics and shallow gameplay. The repetitive missions, tracks, and cars mean the average gamer will experience everything *Mayhem* has to offer in less than an hour, and the rinky-dink 3D effect relies on headache-inducing blue-red glasses and is, generally, ineffective.

The basic concept and visual style may seem cool, but appearances, even in 3D, are deceiving: This is a bargain-bin title. MICHAEL GRIMM

PlayStation The Official Magazine **4**

▲ How many heroes does it take to change a lightbulb? *Trails in the Sky* tasks players with answering this doozy of a question.

Blond-Haired Man
Brightly shooting stars,
leaving trails in the skies...

Legend of Heroes
Trails in the Sky

Fifty hours, sure. But 50 hours of fun?

Info
Format PSP
Pub XSEED Games **Dev** Falcom
Price $29.99 **ESRB** Teen
It's like a fantasy RPG version of the arcade game *Paperboy*.

There's a quest in the early portion of *Legend of Heroes: Trails in the Sky* that challenges our heroes to change a light bulb. No fooling. The plot does eventually go somewhere interesting, but this is one of those RPGs that take its sweet time getting started.

Admittedly, changing a light bulb can still have its challenges: *Trails in the Sky* uses an involving turn-based combat system that gives every character in the party a broad collection of tactics to fight with. Character development also puts plenty of options in the player's hands, so even mundane quests at least have a few good fights to liven them up.

This is not a game that revolves around a central narrative. It expects us to spend a lot of time indulging in random side-quests—hunting monsters, collecting objects, even the occasional bit of random handyman's work. Are those an interesting diversion or an aggravating distraction? Well, everyone's taste is different.

Fans of a story-driven style are also going to have some trouble with the script, which has more than a few awkward moments. Between the breathlessly long sentences and some obviously out-of-place slang, it's not hard to tell that *Trails in the Sky* was originally written in Japanese.

Gamers who want an RPG they can dig into and play, however, probably won't have a problem.

PlayStation The Official Magazine
7

DAVID F. SMITH

Sisters: Delta Attack!
Sandy
Cindy
Mindy
Attack
White Magic
BlackMagic
Items
930/1162 0
1014/1151 86
416/ 465 90
1072/1336 0

Final Fantasy IV
The Complete Collection

Not the wisest way to remake a classic

The PSP remake of *Final Fantasy IV* lives in a weird retro-game version of the uncanny valley: It's either too retro or not retro enough. The 16-bit backgrounds and character sprites have had their size and resolution kicked up several notches. That sounds like a good idea except that the proportions of those characters and the perspective on the backgrounds haven't changed at all. It's an eye-twisting effect, like being trapped in some twilight zone between the Super Nintendo and the PlayStation.

Some scenes look better than others in the redone style—generally the ones with a "flatter," less three-dimensional character to them. On the whole, though, the high-resolution graphics don't improve enough moments to justify the drawbacks. Square Enix should have done one of two things: keep the classic visual style (big chunky pixels and all) or take the harder path into a truer 3D world.

It's too bad because otherwise this is still a tremendous game, an adventure that defined the epic scale and breakneck pace of the modern *Final Fantasies*. There's no shortage of content in the PSP edition either: Besides the main quest, we get *The After Years*, a fun follow-up story crafted in 2009, plus galleries of artwork and music to peruse.

Completists may want this one to fill out their *Final Fantasy* libraries, but most fans can stick with the original versions.

PlayStation The Official Magazine
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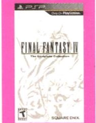
DAVID F. SMITH

Info



Format PSP
Pub Square Enix
Dev Bullets
Price $29.99
ESRB Teen
It's like *Final Fantasy IV*...but...not.

Beyond Good & Evil HD

The revolution will be televised in high definition

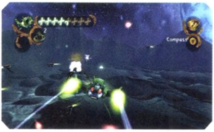
Ubisoft had some weird ideas with the PS2 adventure *Beyond Good & Evil*: a female protagonist who didn't appear as if she'd stepped out of *Girls Gone Wild Sexiest All-Stars*, her talking pig-man uncle, a persistent nature conservation theme, and a soundtrack so wholly ruinous it made screeching cats sound like *Ode to Joy*.

Eight years after the fact, the game remains a curious muddle, but this time it's a curious muddle in high definition. Age has bitten into novelty as the game prominently and unabashedly displays its pockmarks in the form of a spasmodic camera. Yet there's no denying *Evil* was worth playing all those years ago—chiefly for its goofy world and lovable heroes. It is still, we are pleased to note, worth playing now.

An alien invasion on the planet Hillys is barely being thwarted, its Alpha Protocol protectors are anything but sincere in their efforts to protect, and female journalist Jade is swept up in a revolutionary movement. Her efforts to uncover a conspiracy have her photographing wildlife, driving a hovercraft, competing in races, sneaking, fighting, and puzzle solving.

That the game offers a wealth of activities is to its credit. That it does so in the proportion that it does is more problematic. Jade is no action hero; she has the tools to defend herself, but is largely outgunned. Thus, great stretches of the game require a plodding stealth, with the protagonist creeping around conveniently placed obstacles so as to assault enemies from behind, and in their weak spots. Any momentum the game builds—and it has its share of joyous, breathless moments—is sapped by a persistent need to plod, to keep out of sight, and to hide when spotted.

Graphical improvements are welcome here; they serve to highlight a nice contrast between Hillys' natural beauty and the ugliness conjured by its alien invasion. Yet the graphics didn't carry the game then, and they don't now. *Evil* finds its heart with Jade and her goofy allies Pey'j and Double H. They're so eminently likeable, we can't help but follow them into danger, even with a quivering camera and resigned to the knowledge that just around the corner, it's time to crouch, skulk, and wait. Instead, we'd rather be setting Hillys right—right now. GREG ORLANDO

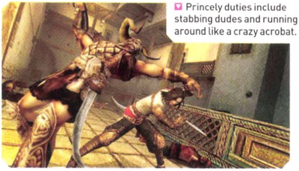


△ Jade and her allies take the battle to Hillys' moon for the game's final chapters.

Info

Format PSN
Pub Ubisoft **Dev** Ubisoft
Price $9.99 **ESRB** Teen
It's like discovering an old friend all over again.

PlayStation The Official Magazine
7



▽ Princely duties include stabbing dudes and running around like a crazy acrobat.

Prince of Persia Trilogy HD

Time has been kind to the royal dynasty

Info

PS3
Prince of Persia
Ubisoft

Format PS3
Pub Ubisoft
Dev Ubisoft Montreal
Price $39.99
ESRB Teen/Mature
It's like taking a parkour-fueled trip down memory lane.

Innovation from five years ago can be passé today, and it's all too easy to put flawed titles on a pedestal. If the *Prince of Persia* series had such flaws, they'd definitely stick out in Ubisoft's stereoscopic 3D, 720p *Prince of Persia Trilogy*, which packs *The Sands of Time*, *Warrior Within*, and *The Two Thrones* onto one disc. This bundle of PS2 games proves that no matter the resolution, it's one of the best game trilogies this side of Olympus.

Thanks to stylized graphics *Sands of Time* feels more magical than ever. Camera woes, control hiccups, and a lackluster audio track can detract from the experience, but they never get in the way of the compelling narrative and intuitive design. While *Warrior* and *Throne's* darker aesthetics don't translate as well to 720p, there are gameplay improvements to be found in both sequels, with the latter standing the test of time.

These are the definitive versions of the games, making justifying a purchase easier than running across the wall and sliding down a pillar. HOLLANDER COOPER

PlayStation The Official Magazine
8

Virtua Tennis 4

A more enthusiastic spin of the ball

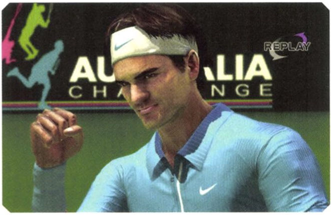
Info
Format PS3
Pub Sega **Dev** Sega
Price $49.99 **ESRB** Everyone
It's like playing tennis just for the fun of it.

There are only two players when it comes to PS3 tennis, but each has a distinct personality. *Top Spin 4* (reviewed favorably last issue) is the dour, serious American focused on victory through realistic simulation. *Virtua Tennis 4*, on the other hand, is the quirky Japanese contender that seems more interested in engaging in some good ol' fashioned arcade fun.

Both games step onto center court similarly equipped, with *Tennis 4* sporting 24 contemporary and classic real-life stars—and an elaborate create-a-player system—to battle it out in off and online matches and tournaments. But of the two, the simulation-minded *Spin* goes the extra mile with better graphics, real-world venues, a more authentic career mode, and a deep shot-control system that's the true differentiator. Hardcore gamers need look no further than *Spin 4* to fulfill their tennis fantasies.

But that's not meant to demean *Tennis 4* as its still enjoyable gameplay offers a nice balance between challenge and accessibility. Casual gamers, in particular, will appreciate the ability to be competitive right off the racket. *Tennis 4* is fun, without being so *serious*. It's a trait most noticeable during the career mode training sessions incorporating off-the-wall elements such as soccer, wind machines, and poker cards. It comes off as more zany board game than lifestyle simulator, but like *Tennis 4*, it's cool in its own weird way. ROGER BURCHILL

PlayStation The Official Magazine **7**



Roger Federer heads up the roster, which offers a representative, but far from comprehensive, sampling of current and past players.

65
K.O. COUNT
57
K.O. COUNT

At this point in time, KOEI's mascot should rightly be a dead horse.

Dynasty Warriors 7

Come now, there's no shame in surrender

Info
Format PS3
Pub Tecmo KOEI
Dev Omega Force
Price $59.99
ESRB Teen
It's like seven of a kind.

As with the early days of MTV, the heavy-metal music video presentation of the 14th-century conquest of China called "Dynasty Warriors" is in heavy rotation. This seventh core game in the series has been released with absolutely nothing new to offer to evolve the series beyond its clunky beat-'em-all-and-move-on roots. Players can expect more of the same repetitious, slaughter-laden gameplay; updated yet still outdated graphics; and scathing but grating rock guitar soundtrack that's graced every iteration since the first title on the original PlayStation.

The game sports a story mode and a conquest mode, the latter of which dispenses with the drama and just turns the map into one giant *Risk*-like game board to dominate. There's just not much to recommend here, although everything is certainly serviceable. Fans of the series may delight in the options *Warriors 7* makes available to them, while anyone hoping to give the series another chance will find the same annoying elements front-and-center once again, right down to the bad pop-in enemies and chorelike, rinse-and-repeat gameplay. This is one unlucky seven. RUSSELL GARBUTT

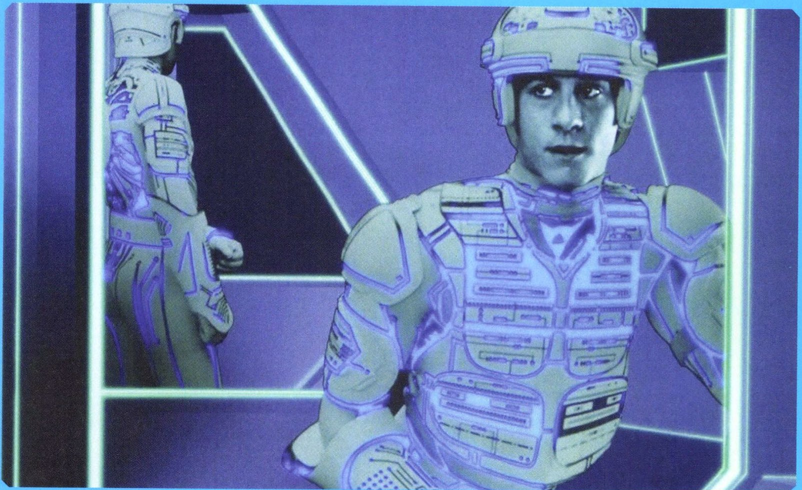
PlayStation The Official Magazine **5**

TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

Because **Jess** plays video games the **ESRB** (that's the Entertainment Software Rating Board) **understands** that some games aren't right for everyone.

Just like movies, **every game has a rating.** And those ratings come from the **ESRB.**

www.ESRB.org



TRON

Neon nostalgia still burns brightly

Info

Price $39.99
Creators Steven Lisberger, Bonnie MacBird
Starring Jeff Bridges, Bruce Boxleitner, David Warner, Cindy Morgan
Rated PG
Extras Audio commentary, *TRON Phenomenon* and *Making of TRON* documentaries, photo album.

It's easy to appreciate the impact *TRON* has had on movie making, general pop culture, and videogames. Health power-ups, red vs. blue, deathmatches... It was all spelled out in 1982 in vivid, state-of-the-art, and utterly new computer graphics. Sure, the script is weak to say the least, but *TRON* immediately ratchets up the entertainment level as soon as it leaves the real world behind.

The plot wisely focuses on a culture where everything is viewed in videogame terms. In *TRON's* computer-generated landscape, all the world's a game, which makes it easy to forgive the complete nonsense of it all. Jeff Bridges is really just a tour guide into this strange new world as a mythical user trapped among oppressed programs being crushed under the maniacal thumb of the Master Control Program (MCP). Bruce Boxleitner's TRON may be the film's hero, but the real star is the visuals.

Like a four-color comic book come to life, *TRON* is arguably almost as important a cinematic artifact as *Star Wars*. It would be almost a decade before another film even attempted a movie so heavily invested in virtual landscapes and actors. Indeed, watching the slew of extras and listening to the exceptional commentary provides plenty of insight into just what an undertaking this movie was to make.

Historical respect aside, *TRON* is, rather surprisingly, still fun and there's a lot for videogame lovers to enjoy on this Blu-ray. The picture quality is remarkably good and the remastered soundtrack is terrific. There's plenty of grain in spots, of course, and the high definition treatment means details such as cardboard helmet props and the use of a Frisbee for a data disc are clearly visible.

The computer-generated landscapes with their simplistic lines and colors look great though, and while technology has clearly advanced since, *TRON's* aesthetic is still commendable. The disc doesn't add a whole lot of new extras over the DVD version, but does include the plethora of DVD extras with it. Only the hardcore among us will truly get excited over this release, but this is the best way to experience *TRON*—short of going back to 1982.

PlayStation® The Official Magazine
8

JASON D'APRILE

TRON Legacy

Shallow sequel, yet gorgeous as Olivia Wilde

Info

Price $39.99 **Creator** Joseph Kosinski **Starring** Jeff Bridges **Rated** PG-13 **Extras** Disney Second Screen (iOS), *TRON: Uprising, The Next Day: Flynn Lives.*

We're going to skip all the haterade over the much delayed and maligned *TRON: Legacy*. No one should have expected a cinematic masterpiece from a sequel to the weakly scripted original *TRON*. That said, it's unlikely anyone expected the kind of pseudo-Zen-meets-cyber-Nazism that is *Legacy's* script. Even the non-nerds among us can drive a truck through the movie's plot holes and inane gaps in logic.

When a movie is as gorgeous as this one, however, we're willing to give it some leeway. What *Legacy* does brilliantly is not just recreate the fantastic cyber-fantasy world of the original film, but evolve it in a way that just looks right. The virtual, neon-infused cyberspace world on display is stunning and captivating. Where the original grid was mostly a series of flat planes connected by I/O towers, *Legacy* has a sprawling metropolis. In short, it's a visual spectacle that makes us want to spend more time just exploring its world.

The characters and the environmental design complement each other, and there's no shortage of beautiful bodies populating the computer landscape. While the 3D effects are more subdued than we expected, the subtle sense of depth does enhance the overall experience. The effect is even less epic on the home screen, but the Blu-ray's picture and sound quality (especially Daft Punk's terrific score) are jaw-droppingly awesome.

Disney has rounded up a solid pack of extras to go along with the movie, including a short film about Flynn and promos for the upcoming *TRON* animated series. We're the first to admit *Legacy* isn't highbrow entertainment. The script really does hinge on some inane concepts and Bridges seems to be channeling *Big Lebowski's* The Dude for no discernable reason. But *Legacy* is all about eye candy, and for shallow fun coupled with a healthy dose of nostalgia, it's still damn tasty. JD

PlayStation The Official Magazine **7**

Blu-ray Roundup

Thor Tales of Asgard

Price $29.99 **Rated** PG

This early adventure of Thor is surprisingly good. *Asgard* manages to cleverly mix in elements from both the comic and the general mythology, and even has a decent pack of extras. The flick is certainly one of the best of the straight-to-video animated Marvel releases and should whet fans' appetite for this summer's live-action movie. **7**

Human Planet

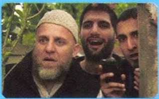
Price $49.98 **Rated** NR

BBC's *Human Planet* moves away from the animal kingdom to show how humans have adapted to every environment on the planet. At times, the show's eight episodes are vividly brutal—such as the filming of a whaling expedition—but it's always brilliantly fascinating. **9**

Vanquisher

Price $29.98 **Rated** R

Asian flicks are always a crapshoot, and for every *Ong Bak*, there's a dozen stinkers. *Vanquisher* fits squarely in the latter category. This is a terribly acted mess with an incoherent plot, poorly filmed action, and a female lead whose facial hair is a bit too detailed in hi-def. **4**



Four Lions

Price $29.98 **Rated** R

A comedy about Muslim suicide bombers, *Four Lions* manages to be both funny and disturbing at the same time. The movie makes its cast seem painfully human and even likeable, which makes their outrageous actions even more alien. **8**

Want that

Lust-have stuff for PlayStation people

Porsche 918 Spyder

A hybrid with a 500hp mid-mounted V8 that can hit 60mph in 3.1 seconds, the 918 also has two electric motors that provide an additional 218hp and allow it to deliver 78mpg.

$845,000

porsche.com

Xperia PLAY

It may not be the NGP, but the PLAY smartphone runs the newest Android software and comes with game controls and access to a library of classic PSone titles.

$TBD (contract dependent)

sonyericsson.com

Motorola Xoom Wi-Fi

The first non-iPad tablet that's worth a whirl, the Xoom sports a 10.1-inch screen, front/rear cameras, HDMI output, a dual-core processor, and runs Google's suite of apps.

$599

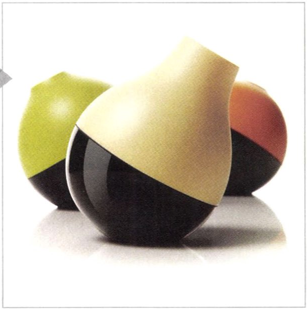
motorola.com

WD TV Live Hub

Stream shows from Live Hub's one terabyte hard drive or via direct access to Hulu, Netflix, and more to any networked TV or computer in full 1080p.

$200

wdc.com

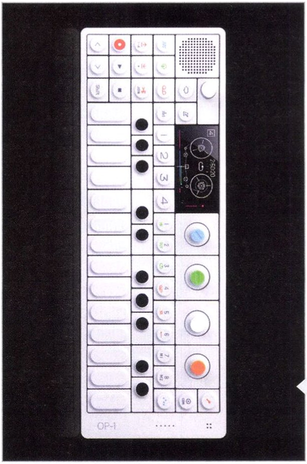


fuseproject Peel

Available in pear, apple, or orange, this fruit-shaped gizmo connects an iPhone with a TV and eliminates channel-surfing tedium: We tell it what we like, it tells us what's on.

$100

fuseproject.com

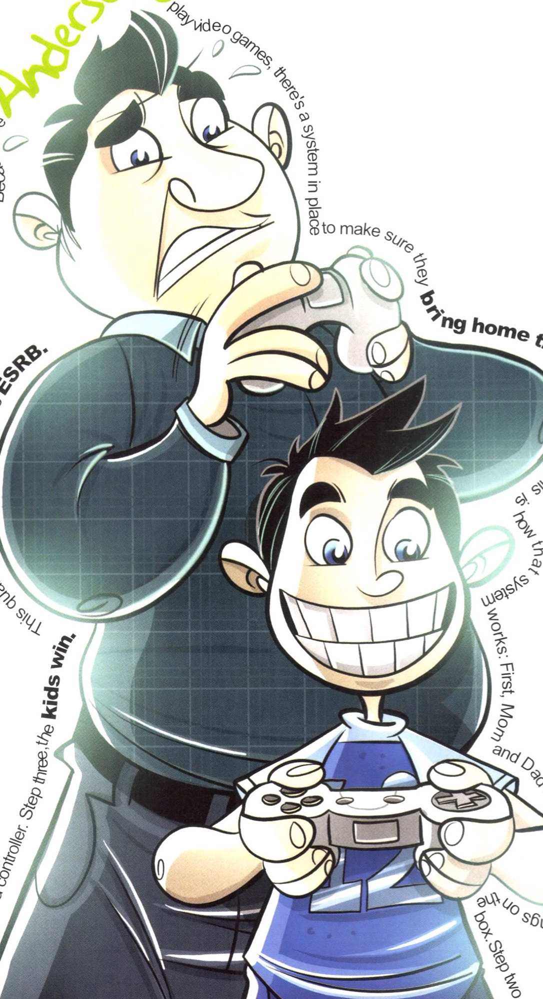


Teenage Engineering OP-1

It's a sampler. It's a synthesizer. The OP-1 also has FM radio, music sequencers, and a multi-track tape mode for limitless creative options.

$799

teenageengineering.com



Because the **Andersons** play video games, there's a system in place to make sure they **bring home the right ones.** This is how that system works: First, Mom and Dad select games using the ratings on the box. Step two, everyone gets a controller. Step three, the **kids win.** This quality time is presented by the **ESRB.**

EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

eserved.

mail@ptom

At one point, this letters section had two Manimal references. Now it has none. Oh, wait...

Email us at **PTOM_letters@futureus.com** or write to PTOM, c/o Future US, 4000 Shoreline Ct. Suite 400, South San Francisco, CA 94080. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

PS3 | PSP | PlayStation.2
PlayStation
The Official Magazine
Are you hardcore enough for DARK SOULS?
DRAGON AGE II
SOCOM 4
THE LAST GUARDIAN
Ratchet & Clank
Friends...or foes? We put All 4 One's co-op mayhem to the test!
WE PLAYED IT!
FINAL FANTASY XIII-2
ALL-STARS
PORTAL 2

Even if the PTOM crew managed to work together like Ratchet & Clank, the economy would still stink.

Grimm Commentary

I felt compelled to write after reading a review by Michael Grimm on *Test Drive Unlimited 2*. On the top right of page 75 (Issue #43, March 2011) there's picture with a caption reading "Practicality versus styling: Who decides the victor? The wife, probably." The game was rated 5/10, so, my thought is that this comment was not meant to be taken as a compliment. Wow, Michael. Really? I may not be your typical subscriber, but I doubt I'm the only female. Please remember to lead by example instead of appealing to the lowest common denominator. As a writer, you have a lot of power. Please use it responsibly and respectfully.

EVELYN CANADA

We at PTOM like to use our power for good, which mostly involves eating Cheez Doodles while punching bad guys in videogames. And we would never, ever demean women. We meant to suggest women hold a lot of power when it comes to making economic decisions—especially within the framework of a marriage.

Yes, Yes We Do...

I enjoyed reading the letters section in issue #44. You'll take the blandest letters and respond with gold.

AUSTIN BROWNING PARTS UNKNOWN

Or Maybe Not

I realized you guys never take any of the letters seriously (even though some are plain stupid). Take some consideration in what you say back to readers, and don't ask us for our opinions if all you're going to say is something stupid to us in return.

STEPHEN SABLAN PARTS UNKNOWN

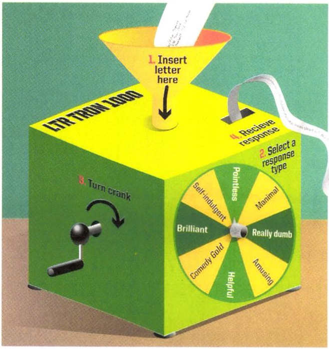
We strive, always, to be entertaining and informative. But sometimes we're too busy, so we entrust the care of our Mail section to LetterTron, a clever device built to ensure a maximum amount of us not doing any real work. We're currently adjusting its serious-to-goofy response

Time to Set Sale

Why don't PSN games ever go down in price? I know there are sometimes sales or special offers, but there are rarely permanent reductions in price. Retail games usually go down in price within a few months, so I don't understand why PSN games can't follow suit. I want to buy *Flower* but I don't think it's worth $10 for two hours of gameplay. If it was $5 I would gladly buy it, and the developers would also make more money from people like me who aren't willing to pay full price. **ERIC BAXTER** ONTARIO, CANADA

To be fair, you'd probably pay $10-plus to see a two-hour movie, so it's not a great stretch to pay that amount for a great two-hour-long game like Flower. *Beyond that, keep in mind why stores offer discounts: Either as a lure to get people to step foot inside their building or a means to free up physical space for new inventory. Those factors don't really exist with PSN.*

We welcome reader photos, letters, and stories ("Submissions"), however, we cannot promise to publish any Submission and none will be returned. Neither PlayStation: The Official Magazine ("PTOM") nor Future US, Inc. shall be liable for loss or damage to any Submission. By sending in your Submissions to PTOM you represent and warrant that you own or otherwise have all necessary rights to the Submissions to allow us to publish them in PTOM and as follows. You grant PTOM a worldwide, royalty-free, perpetual, irrevocable, non-exclusive right and fully sub-licensable license to use, copy, distribute, publish, modify, adapt, translate, and store, your Submissions, in any form, format, or medium, of any kind now known or later developed and to use your name, likeness, and any other information in connection with the use of the Submission you provide.



HOW IT WORKS We'd be lying if we said dashing off responses to your letters is simple. With LetterTron, it's SUPER-simple. We're only mildly concerned at the way the machine's always mumbling and picking up sharp objects.

rate but are concerned any changes in its programming may cause LetterTron to want to answer letters less and, ah, kill humans more.

Bang for the Buck

I recently purchased *Homefront*. The game was a lot of fun to play and I was really getting into it, but then after only six chapters it ended! I thought it was a joke. How could someone charge me $60 for a game and only have five or six hours of gameplay? I miss the old days when you paid a lot for a game and you actually got your money's worth. It just seems to me that people are more worried about making money instead of putting out a great game.

BRANDON STEVENS PARTS UNKNOWN

Brandon, this is a hot-button topic with the PTOM staff. And we've put top men (Top... Men...) on the matter. Flip back to the Big 10 section (p.22) to read our debate on game length and value.

Ask Greg

Q You guys should definitely do a podcast. I know this might be hard to do since y'all are so busy covering games for the magazine. But even if it's once a month, I would love to hear your guys' voices and opinions outside of print.

JOSE GARCIA PARTS UNKNOWN

A It's not a question of if, Jose, but rather of when. A PTOM podcast is as certain as death, taxes, and editor spoon fights. In fact, we already have plans for our intern "Lewis" Anne Lewis to talk about her shoes for no less than 35 minutes each and every episode. It's going to be a blast.

Essential Feedback

I was recently reading your "Essential PS3 games" (Issue #43) and I have quite the disagreement. For one, why is *Call of Duty: Black Ops* there? The *Call of Duty* formula has not been changed for the past five years. Since *Modern Warfare*, it's been a game based on luck, who sees who first, and who has the quickest reflexes—which is great, but we're getting bored of it. After the (admittedly satisfying) single-player, *Black Ops* is *World at War* with Wager Match, Theater, and emblem customization. It's a great game, but it's definitely not "essential." (Unless you haven't played the previous *Dutys*—but then again, who hasn't?)

And why choose *Dead Space 2* over the original *Dead Space*? The first game was way scarier than its successor because it had tension and suspense. *Dead Space 2* is scary (and a fun game, taking notes from *Resident Evil 4*'s insanely awesome gameplay), but it's scary like how someone popping up and saying "boo!" is scary—more surprising than tense.

And on a side note, why is *Killzone 3* a 10/10? It has awesome graphics and God knows it's fun as hell, but you can't change the fact that it's *Killzone 2* with better textures, sped up gameplay, and minor class changes.

OMAR HEGAZY PARTS UNKNOWN

Omar, you're why we love our readers: You're smart, passionate, and opinionated—but you also remind us of why we're always correct. Take Killzone 3, *for example. You say yourself that it's fun as hell with awesome graphics. We couldn't agree more. It's perhaps the funnest and prettiest shooter of 2011, and that, dear Omar, is reason enough for the game to earn top marks and a spot on our newly updated Essentials list (p.92). As for the rest:* Black Ops *is our fave* Call of Duty*—the quintessential military shooter for both solo and multiplayer. And though we loved both* Dead Spaces, *we thought the sequel is much sharper. And, indeed, scarier.*

Potent Portable

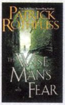
Just read your expose on NGP (Issue #44). Great read, but I have a question: Can it really be that awesome?

JOHN CHRISTOPHER ATLANTA, GA

Is pizza not mana from heaven? Is Gary Busey not the sharpest crazy man in the western world? The answer to these questions, as well as yours: yes.

Et Cetera

All the other stuff that distracts PTOM



The Wise Man's Fear

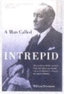
"Day 2 of the Kingkiller Chronicles proves Patrick Rothfuss is no fluke. Just as compelling as the first volume, *Fear* continues to unwind the ripping yarn of Kvothe the Bloodless."

GARY STEINMAN

Zombie Cafe

"This FREE iPad game lets me build a five-star restaurant on the back of zombie slave labor. Plus, I get to serve dishwater soup in defiance of any and all health codes."

GREG ORLANDO



A Man Called Intrepid

"I stumbled across this book in a garage sale and I was amazed by its insights. Now, more than ever, these true tales of World War II's secret war—and the extraordinary people who fought it—need to be read and appreciated."

ROGER BURCHILL

Des Ark

"With intricately intertwining arpeggios, serene, smoky vocal harmonies, and an earnest sort of melancholy, Des Ark's *Don't Rock the Boat, Sink the F*cker* might be one of the prettiest albums of 2011. I'm hooked!"

SCOTT BUTTERWORTH

PS3 Essential collection

Build the ultimate PS3 library with our no-filler guide to the best next-gen games

1

Action Adventure

Uncharted 2
Among Thieves

There's no way around it, Nathan Drake is the PS3's biggest star and *Uncharted 2* is his most impressive adventure yet, with breathtaking action and an incredible story. No excuses: Get it and play it!

10 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Naughty Dog**

2

Action Adventure

God of War III

Huge beautiful battlegrounds and brutally gory fights with magnificent climaxes: we expected the world from the finale of Kratos' trilogy and we got it. A must-have for anyone with even the slightest amount of bloodlust.

10 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Santa Monica Studio**

3

First-Person Shooter

Call of Duty
Black Ops

Black Ops improves on *Modern Warfare's* already awesome FPS formula. The franchise is in top form with a brand new single-player story, the beloved zombie mode, and its top-notch online multiplayer.

10 Pub **Activision**
Dev **Treyarch**

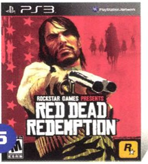
4

Adventure

Heavy Rain

Innovative, intriguing, and immersive, *Heavy Rain* is one of the most original titles in years. The mystery of the Origami Killer will keep you guessing until it's solved... or until the heroes die in the process.

10 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Quantic Dream**



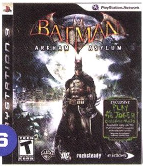
5

Open-World Shooter

Red Dead Redemption

Continuing with its record of amazing titles, Rockstar's latest open-world game combines a drop-dead gorgeous Old West with a mesmerizing story and fabulous characters.

10 Pub **Rockstar Games**
Dev **Rockstar SD/North**



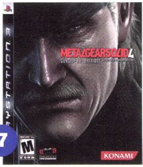
6

Action Adventure

Batman
Arkham Asylum

Finally, the Caped Crusader gets the current-gen game he deserves. Use a plethora of bat-gadgets and bat-moves to take back the Joker-controlled Arkham Asylum and love every second of it.

10 Pub **Eidos/Warner Bros.**
Dev **Rocksteady**



7

Stealth Action

Metal Gear Solid 4

Hideo Kojima's masterpiece might be criticized for its lengthy cutscenes and convoluted storyline, but that shouldn't stop anyone from experiencing one of the most important games on any platform today.

10 Pub **Konami**
Dev **Kojima Productions**

NEW

8

First-Person Shooter

Killzone 3

War isn't pretty—unless you're playing *Killzone 3*. But the latest clash between the ISA and Helghast ventures beyond great graphics with improvements to combat, storyline, and multiplayer that propel it to the FPS genre's top ranks.

10 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Guerrilla Games**

9

Fighter

Super Street Fighter IV

An update to the best fighting game from the most well-respected series in gaming history makes for a can't-miss title. Kicking heads and nostalgia combine to form one perfect package.

10 Pub **Capcom**
Dev **Capcom**

10

Driving

Need For Speed
Hot Pursuit

The high speed pursuits from the good old days are back and they look better than ever. Race the cops or join them, but the cars are hot either way so don't let that sway which side of the law to select.

10 Pub **Electronic Arts**
Dev **Criterion Games**

Team Choice

Homefront

"Right now, the birds are in the air, soaring across the bay toward an uncertain future. The Koreans are dug in, but if we take the Golden Gate, San Francisco will follow. And *Homefront's* brief but fierce war is very much worth fighting."

Greg Orlando
Executive Editor

Power
Custom silicon harnesses crisp HD, ear-splitting audio, multi-processor might, and Blu-ray to deliver pure gaming perfection.

Online
Surf the net, message friends, and download movies, music and expansion packs, plus demos and games from the PlayStation Store.

Connectivity
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Get inside access to hot games, sizzling betas, and other goodies by subscribing to Qore. Well? What are you waiting for?

Get it now on PSN

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11

PS3
MASS EFFECT 2

Role-Playing

Mass Effect 2

Mass Effect 2 features a spectacular story wrought with intense action and game-changing decisions, and the PS3 version of BioWare's third-person shooter/RPG is the franchise's best. Bring on *Mass Effect 3*!

10 Pub **Electronic Arts**
Dev **BioWare**

12

PS3
LittleBigPlanet 2

Platformer

LittleBigPlanet 2

Oh Sackboy, how we love thee. The biggest little game on PS3 is rocking our worlds with its sequel. The standard in-game fare is excellent, but it's the ingenious levels crafted by the the fan community that truly amaze and delight.

10 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Media Molecule**

13

PS3
FINAL FANTASY XIII
SQUARE ENIX

Role-Playing

Final Fantasy XIII

It takes a bit of a commitment, but the gorgeous visuals, crazy deep combat, and oh yes, the lovely heroine Lightning, make this lengthy role-playing game more than worth the time it takes to get through it.

10 Pub **Square Enix**
Dev **Square Enix**

14

PS3
ASSASSIN'S CREED II
UBISOFT

Stealth Adventure

Assassin's Creed II

While the first *Assassin's Creed* may not quite have lived up to its full potential, Ubisoft built off what they learned to create the best parkour-influenced stealth game of all time. It doesn't hurt that it's awfully pretty in action either.

10 Pub **Ubisoft**
Dev **Ubisoft Montreal**

15

PS3
ROCK BAND 3
HARMONIX

Music

Rock Band 3

Didn't think we could pass up the best party game going right now, did you? With a massive songlist and the brilliant new Pro mode, *Rock Band 3* easily overtakes its rival *Guitar Hero* for the top music game on PS3.

9 Pub **EA/MTV Games**
Dev **Harmonix**

16

PS3
DEAD SPACE 2
VISCERAL GAMES
EA

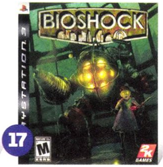
Third-Person Shooter

Dead Space 2

This chilling space horror sequel leaves us jumping at every turn. New enemies, terrifying environments, and the feeling that death is around every corner make this a game worth checking out. Turn out the lights, if you dare.

9 Pub **Electronic Arts**
Dev **Visceral Games**

17



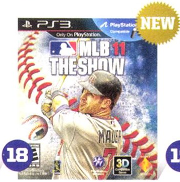
First-Person Shooter

BioShock

One of the most beautifully designed shooters of all time with an amazing story to boot. Due to the freshness and originality of the first romp through Rapture, we recommend the original over the still magnificent sequel.

10 Pub **2K Games**
Dev **Irrational Games**

18



Sports

MLB 11 The Show

Consider the sport of baseball a PlayStation exclusive as there's no better videogame representation of the American pastime. The Move-supported Home Run Derby adds arcade fun on top of the simulation perfection.

10 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **SCE San Diego**

19

PLAYSTATION 3
grand theft auto IV

Open-World Action

Grand Theft Auto IV

There's a reason why *GTA* sells like crazy. This open-world gangster game is one of the most incredible achievements that the videogame medium has to offer. Great story, great characters, great adventure. Just plain great.

10 Pub **Rockstar Games**
Dev **Rockstar North**

20

NEW
PS3
DRAGON AGE II
BIOWARE

Role-Playing

Dragon Age II

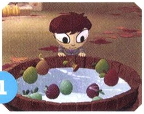
Decisions, decisions… Action-based gameplay is fused with traditional RPG elements in this latest series entry, but guiding hero Hawke's ascension in Kirkwall remains as riveting as ever. Beware the Darkspawn!

9 Pub **Electronic Arts**
Dev **BioWare**

PSN Best Games

It's the best of the best! Get the lowdown on this month's PSN goodies no one should live without.

BEST FULL GAMES



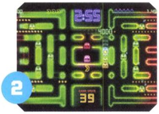
1

Tricks and Treats

Costume Quest

Sure, it's Halloween themed, but the adventure itself is timeless. With candy and monster-smiting in equal measure, this sugary delight is a charming homage to *Final Fantasy X-2*, enhanced by Tim Schafer's humor.

9 Pub **THQ**
Dev **Double Fine**



2

Retro Revival

Pac-Man Championship Ed.

There'll always be a place in our hearts for gaming's gluttonous yellow goober—but nostalgia be damned, this retro homage offers a whole new frenetic take on the classic gameplay.

9 Pub **Namco Bandai**
Dev **Namco Bandai**

3

Platforming Puzzle Racer

Joe Danger

A mix of *ExciteBike*-style racing and insane stunt-driven platforming action, this vibrant indie gem shines brightly among the best PSN offerings available. Getting wild and dangerous has never been this awesome.

9 Pub **Hello Games**
Dev **Hello Games**

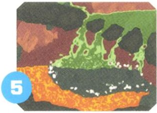
4

Zen Exploration

Flower

This gorgeous concept game makes blowing hordes of fluttering petals around a lush natural environment into an unforgettable experience that holds up against the biggest triple-A offerings. Don't pass this one up.

9 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **thatgamecompany**



5

Puzzle Shooter

PixelJunk Shooter

The fourth entry in the *PixelJunk* series is easily the best. Saving trapped mining colonists with a versatile, environmental puzzle-solving ship is a creative and challenging affair taxing both the mind and reflexes.

9 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Q-Games**

6

Lettuce Defend Ourselves

Plants vs. Zombies

This ubiquitous tower defense game has made the platform rounds, but there's no denying its insidious charms and eternal goofiness. Hours will be spent meticulously maintaining the grid-like lawn in an attempt to fend off the rampaging waves of groaning, brain-chomping zombies.

9 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **PopCap Games**

7

Surreal Puzzler

Braid

Here's another instance where gaming melds with art. *Braid's* blend of captivating presentation, engrossing story, and mind-bending time-based puzzles makes for one of the most weird, wonderful platforming, puzzle-solving experiences available on PSN.

8 Pub **Hothead Games**
Dev **Number None**

8

Dolled-Up Adventure

Stacking

Double Fine games come chock full of personality and charm. Using babushka dolls to solve puzzles and explore a '30s Depression-era-esque world of miniature mannequins may not seem all that compelling, but it is. This is a fine argument for Double Fine to make more PSN titles.

8 Pub **THQ**
Dev **Double Fine**

9

Cool New Old School

Scott Pilgrim vs. The World

Read Bryan Lee O'Malley's excellent *Scott Pilgrim* graphic novel series, see the film, and then battle for love in this retro-style brawler. It's not often we can recommend all three—this is a licensed game done right, and one that pays homage in grand fashion.

8 Pub **Ubisoft**
Dev **Ubisoft**

10

Tower of Power

PixelJunk Monsters

What's one to do when monsters attack? How about earning funds and building offensive towers featuring varying attributes like speed, range, and power? Or, we could invite them in for diplomatic discussions and tea, but what fun is that?

8 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Q-Games**

PSN Video Delivery Service Spotlight

What we're watching on our PS3 this month

"Kato, I want you to take my hand and I want you to come with me on this adventure."
"I'll go with you, but I don't want to touch you."

Green Hornet

The Green Hornet

ETA **May 3** Rated **PG-13** Genre **Action/Comedy** Studio **Sony Pictures/Columbia Pictures**

As with Britt Reid (aka the Green Hornet), the PTOM staffers are slackers by day, party animals by night, and crime-fighting action heroes 24/7. We, too, are prepared to risk life and limb to bring down underworld thugs and kingpins. It is unfortunate we lack a "Kato" to assist us, but our intern is currently being brutalized in an effort to upgrade our martial arts expertise. In the meantime, we will closely observe Seth Rogan's comedic modus operandi to help develop our witty hero banter.

Top VDS Downloads

Movies

Jackass 3
Due Date
Faster
The Fighter
127 Hours

TV Shows

Family Guy: Season 9
Smallville: Season 10
Archer: Season 2
Supernatural: Season 6
Weeds: Season 6

BEST FREE STUFF

Saucy RPG DLC

Ar tonelico Qoga
Elemia Island Vol. 1.

Get a taste of *Ar tonelico Qoga's* visual novel Dive sections in this first of five DLC volumes. This Elemia Island scenario stars Ar Ru and includes a new Reyvateil sporting pink hair and a purple outfit.

Pub **NIS America**
Dev **Gust**

Straight From the Top

Kaz Hirai
NGP Interview

This video features SCE president Kazuo Hirai discussing plans and details for Sony's next portable handheld, codenamed NGP. Our palms are already getting sweaty in anticipation.

Pub **SCEA**
Dev **SCEA**

Slammin' Theme

Slam Bolt Scrappers

Embellish the PS3's background with this stylish theme celebrating two glorious age-old traditions: fast-paced puzzle solving and beating the crap out of heinous winged monsters.

Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Fire Hose Games**

(More) Extra Missions DLC

Hyperdimension Neptunia

Even more arsenal-upgrade delights await in this smattering of new missions to explore. Save a magic tree from the clutches of an evil butterfly or help hunt down a missing shop employee.

Pub **NIS America**
Dev **Compile Heart**

Down-Lordable Content

Lord of Arcana
Pack 3

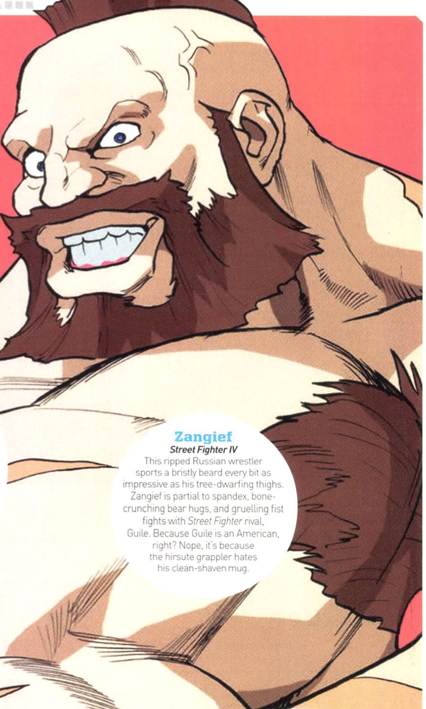
Four new missions await in this freebie pack. The Golden Dragon King is in need of annihilation, lake beauties need saving, there's miasma clearing to do, and secret knowledge to possess.

Pub **Square Enix**
Dev **Square Enix**

Beards

Because on PS3, shaving's for sissies

Dante? Chris Redfield? Cole MacGrath? They're clean-shaven pipsqueaks. For years we've suffered pin-up heroes with steak-sized biceps and smooth-like-a-baby's-bottom faces. The fact is, if someone is worried about that spot of stubble when garrotting tower-sized hellspawn, heroism clearly isn't for him. Take these esteemed gents, for example: They're not happy unless they're sanding down demons with their jawlines, so they've ditched the Mach3s in favor of all-out facial fluff. From unkempt goatees to finely groomed sideburns, here are PlayStation's finest purveyors of the latest in grizzled, hobo fashion.



Captain Price

Call of Duty: Modern Warfare

Diamond-hard Captain Price not only dispenses justice to tracksuit-wearing Soviet swine and squashes a nuclear terror plot, he then survives five years incarcerated in a Russian Gulag, presumably sustaining himself on rations smuggled in under his perfectly groomed handlebar 'stache.

Zangief

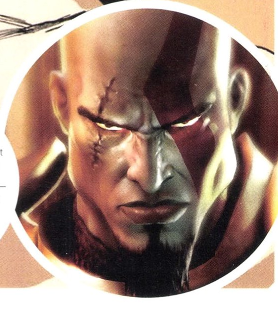
Street Fighter IV

This ripped Russian wrestler sports a bristly beard every bit as impressive as his tree-dwarfing thighs. Zangief is partial to spandex, bone-crunching bear hugs, and gruelling fist fights with *Street Fighter* rival, Guile. Because Guile is an American, right? Nope, it's because the hirsute grappler hates his clean-shaven mug.

Big Boss

Metal Gear Solid 4

The Snake clan patriarch spent his early years building walking nuclear deathbots, as well as his own military state. After awaking from a decade-long cryogenic slumber and ensuring his dashing silver mane is still intact, Big Boss sets off to teach his moustached offspring one last valuable life lesson: "Grow the sides too, my son."



Kratos

God of War III

The angry ex-deity packs more blades than a New Jersey pimp, but they're used exclusively for slicing up centaurs, gods, titans, family members, and semi-naked women—not his devilish goatee, which is so sharp he could probably impale harpies on it. Who needs the Blades of Athena when you have the mighty Chin of Kratos?

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